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**Cognitive Dissonance in Robert A. Heinlein's Starship Troopers:
The Fascist Utopia**

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DECLARATION

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Dedication

In Loving Memory of my Beloved Mother
Djbaili Fatiha (1943-2009)
RIP

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Abstract

This dissertation studies cognitive dissonance in Robert A. Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*. The chosen novel is often labeled as a 'Fascist Utopia'; an oxymoron that sums up the essence of its tone. The aim is to detect and analyze the scope of dissonance within Heinlein's narrative and to extrapolate it to his readership. For this purpose, I propose a multidisciplinary approach with two major orientations: close reading (a context-dependent psychonarratological angle) and distant reading (context-free sentiment analysis of his readership's responses). The close reading section comprises a review of the writer's biography: his life, works, and political commitment. This part is combined with a socio-historical study of the writer's anchorage. Thus, Heinlein is revealed as a complex writer with an undeniable craft in sending mixed signals to his readership. On the other hand, the distant reading section purports to place the readers at the center of the thesis' concern. Hence, cognitive dissonance is envisaged as a transmissible condition – from author to reader. At the level of the theoretical scaffolding, I set a wide range of theory running the gamut from new historicism to cognitive psychology- passing by reception theories, readers' response theory, and psychonarratology. The works of Darko Suvin, Frederic Jameson, Leon Festinger, Dixon & Bertolussi and Franco Moretti are used to elaborate a ground base theoretical and methodological proposition. In its psychonarratological segment, the study reviews the Trilogy of Liberty and Self-responsibility: *Starship Troopers* (1959), *A Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961), and *the Moon is a Harsh Mistress* (1966). Here, this section reveals the author's cultural dissonance i.e. the incompatibility of his standpoints and discourse as juxtaposed to the then mainstream cultural discourse of the US. A further insight into the film adaptation by Paul Verhoeven (1997) accentuates the ascertainment that Heinlein's inconsistencies do fuel the US postures in foreign policy since the end of WWII. The film has attracted a new readership with new forms of reception / response, and thus stimulated a new Heinlein criticism. The distanced sentiment analysis of web-based readers' responses demonstrates that cognitive dissonance is also observed within their feedback. The most observed forms are verbal contradictions, inconsistent judgments, and autobiographical digressions. Other forms of cognitive biases appear along the study. They confirm that cognitive dissonance exists within the *Starship Troopers*' interpretive communities and that the readers do not believe that it is a fascist utopia, but rather a fascist-friendly narrative. The other finding is that there is a nexus between the author's dissonance and his fan readers'.

Keywords

Robert A. Heinlein - *Starship Troopers* - Fascist Utopia - Cognitive Dissonance - Readers' Responses - Sentiment Analysis - Distant Reading.

List of abbreviations

CA: Content Analysis

CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis

CDT: Cognitive Dissonance Theory

IC: Interpretive community

RAH : Robert A. Heinlein

SA: Sentiment Analysis

SF: Science Fiction

SISL : Stranger in a Strange Land

ST: Starship Troopers

TMIAHM: The Moon is a Harsh Mistress

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This dissertation studies cognitive dissonance in Robert A. Heinlein's novel *Starship Troopers* (1959). It deals with the writer's contradictions and their potential transmission to his readership. The aim is to unveil the extent of the gap between his narrative and the insinuations of fascism he is subjected to. The problematic would be addressed through the combination of context-based and context-free theoretical / methodological propositions.

In contrast with his other novels such as *A Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961), and *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* (1966), *Starship Troopers* divides readers and stirs inconsistent judgments. As a respected master of Post WWII science fiction, Robert A. Heinlein (1907-1989) presents a certain conundrum: a controversial writer –whose discourse flirts closely with fascism and abruptly with libertarianism. He is a low-profile author (with an inconsistent discourse) who alternatively pledges libertarianism and authoritarianism. Therefore, early indices of cognitive dissonances are perceptible in his fictions as well as in the reception of his works. That is what I intend to study. The thesis will also attempt to unveil the concept of fascist utopia in *Starship Troopers*, or in other words, how Heinlein utilizes contradictions to propose a utopian model based on conscription: a society where suffrage and citizenship are exclusively earned through military service. His posture was barely acceptable in a zeitgeist where National Socialism and Fascism have just ended massacring millions of individuals.

Robert A. Heinlein was not meant to be the typical incarnation of the international writer. Generally American writers are entitled to represent a city, a region, or an ethnic community. Others like Hemingway represent a trend (the Lost Generation). Heinlein is one genuine example of the “Deep Silent America”: a provincial writer who did not belong to the literary and science fiction elite. With this condition, he was likely to be a witness of the unheard and the leftovers, probably more than other notorious writers. In the post WWII USA, Robert A Heinlein became a cult figure. This pioneer of political science fiction (like George Orwell and Aldus Huxley) contributed to the creation of a (specifically American) cultural and literary subconscious – located between anticipation and prophecies. His novel *Starship Troopers* (1959) is a counter-strike to the libertarian mood prevailing over the world.

The novel received mixed reviews from critics, and destabilized a wide number of readers. The majority of them were torn on the novel's appreciation: was it a fascist manifesto or a satire? Iconography of militarism and authoritarianism prevailed all over the narrative. Subsequently, readers did not grasp the militaristic intention of the author. The early rumors of fascism started to stain Heinlein's reputation, while other readers have perceived an adult proposition of utopia.

Starship Troopers proposes a dissonant model which does not match the then American culture. The legitimate culture in postwar democracies is one which rejects totalitarianism and despotism. In his book *Theory of Literature* (1996), Terry Eagleton highlights the concept of embodied beliefs in one legitimate culture / dominant ideology. According to Eagleton, ideology naturalizes social reality and deletes all aspects of doubt on its legitimacy. What looks natural, innate, and inbuilt can seldom be questioned, and thus, myths become realities. These myths become the ground on which legitimate culture is grounded, and all what comes to shake these beliefs would be alien, marginal, and ambiguous. These, obviously, are not tolerated by the myths and doxa (p. 117). With that novel, Heinlein seems to endorse a fetishist attitude towards fascism. This attitude creates a detachment from the values of this cultural area. A similar idea is developed by Stephen Greenblatt (*Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, 1980). He decodes the semantic interaction between the author (or narrator) and the context of creation, as well as the reception of the readers. In literature, the cultural dissonance is an unintentional value added in the written object: a sort of psychological emanation encompassing the text. Greenblatt (2002) Believes "that nothing comes of nothing, even in Shakespeare. I wanted to know where he got the matter he was working with and what he did with that matter" (Greenblatt, S. *Hamlet in Purgatory*, 2002, p.4). How Heinlein came to write that novel? What meanings does the context of creation create? These are keys to interpret the novel.

With his novel, Heinlein introduced an alternative culture, which is opposed to the dominant culture. His vision of the world was quasi suicidal in regard to the dominant Western (and more precisely American) thought: Domino Theory, Containment Theory, McCarthyism and the fear of the Soviets (Often portrayed in SF

cinema as space Aliens). In return, he drafted a world where the aliens / the enemies (The Bugs) are infinitely superior to human beings. Thus, not only has he destroyed ethno-centricism, but he inflicted a deep narcissistic injury (a Freudian concept referring to self-esteem damages) to the American critics. The “Other” is not to be fought because “he” is inferior, but rather because humans/Americans (The “Self”) have things to learn from the Aliens (the “Other”). Additionally, Heinlein performed another act of cultural dissonance, by offering readers a counter-example of what a post WWII society could be: authoritarian, excessively patriotic, and inclined towards abnegation and self-sacrifice. In parallel, the end of McCarthyism and the rise of the “Flower Power, intrigued the reading references of the then culture: the book was alternatively adored and despised. Later, with the same narrative - in the 1990s, the film adaptation was received even more violently. *The Washington Post* and the French journal *Libération* attacked the film and accused it of propagating Heinlein’s fascistic theses. The evolution of history made viewers see it differently, especially after the adoption of the Patriot Act in 2001, in the aftermath of the 09/11 events. Nowadays both the novel and the film are appraised differently. Seemingly, Heinlein was dissonant vis-a-vis his culture, but did not remain systematically dismissed by the modern day readers.

In my Magistère dissertation, defended in 2003 in Batna University, I have attempted to experiment the teaching of literature through recent film adaptations. In parallel, I attempted to stimulate semiotic literacy for nowadays visual learners (learners who are exclusively receptive to sounds, images, shapes and movements). Understanding how Algerian youth receive textual and non-textual messages was a fundamental concern. Along with youth-oriented novels and film adaptations, I chose Robert A. Heinlein novel *Starship Troopers* and its 1997 film version directed by Paul Verhoeven. As a reader and viewer of SF narratives, I felt the movie was too violent, and the novel too slow-paced, so I discarded both. Yet, I assumed that book was particular and needed some attention because of its resonance. That was how that idea of capturing the ambiguities and assessing their reception was born. That dissertation appealed for interdisciplinary studies: literary text narratology, semiotics, film studies, and the theory of reception. There was a need to move students’ reception from

abstract reception to actual response. The discovery of Leon Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance Theory highlighted some dark corners, and urged inquiry. Having already worked on reader's cognitive responses in the same dissertation (memory, attention and involvement), my intention is to detect and demonstrate the existence of cognitive dissonance within a literary work, and its transmissibility through the multiple levels of reading they offer depending on various cultural and historical contexts.

Robert A. Heinlein is a constant in SF studies. Prolific and enigmatic to various researchers, he is subjected to original approaches in BA, MA and doctorate dissertations. Here is a non-exhaustive list of the latest visible works on Heinlein (MLA International Bibliography and PNST): Malika Belkharchouche's *The Nature of Characterization in Post-War American Science Fiction: A Study of Selected Novels by Asimov, Heinlein, and Dick* (University of Constantine, 2011); Axel Hederstedt's *The Libertarian Vision of Lazarus Long: A Libertarian Reading of Robert A. Heinlein's Time Enough for Love* (Karlstad University, 2013); Tereza Koblihová's BA dissertation : *Risk Management in Time-Travel Works by Isaac Asimov and Robert A. Heinlein* (Masaryk University 2015); Ryan Thurmon 's *Laughing in Space: Robert Heinlein's The Moon is a Harsh Mistress and Towards a New Humor Framework* (Florida Atlantic University 2017) and Anika Holland 's *Grokking Gender: Understanding Sexual Pleasure & Empathy in 1960s Science Fiction* (Ohio University, 2017). These dissertations internationalize Heinlein and study him in comparison with other SF authors, or do focus on one element in his narratives. Little is found on the notion of cognitive dissonance in SF and its incidence on readers.

On the nexus between cognitive dissonance and literature, what is visible is a set of mixed methods involving sentiment analysis and narratology: Brian Robert Uldall's *Counterfactual Thinking and Cognitive Consistency* (Ohio State University, 2005); Maria-Eireini Panagiotidou's *Intertextuality and Literary Reading: a Cognitive Poetic Approach* (University of Nottingham, 2012) and Steffan Kyhe's *Cognitive Dissonance and its Influence on Online Reviewers: A Study of Dissonance in People who Recently Wrote a Review of Apple on Trustpilot.com* (Aarhus University, 2015). The aforementioned dissertations have introduced sentiment analysis and psychonarratology in the study of cognitive dissonance. The interdisciplinary impulse

between literary objects and non literary approaches is found in two dissertations which analyze literary works through dialectology and sociolinguistics: Ilhem Mortad-Serir's *Dialect Use in the Victorian Novel: Dickens's Hard Times and Eliot's Silas Marner* (University of Tlemcen, 2011) and Fayza Benmansour's *An Examination of the Northern Lancashire and Yorkshire Dialects through the Works of Mrs. Gaskell's North and South and Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights* (University of Tlemcen, 2015).

Heinlein's cognitive dissonance and his readership's response have not been studied in a whole autonomous problematic. Within these epistemic, theoretical and methodological gaps, I assume the rationale of this dissertation will be the creation of a theoretical and methodological framework that will allow the study of the writer's inconsistencies and their incidences on his readers. Elaborated in a research project (CNEPRU directed by Dr Zeghar Dalila and hosted by URNOP, Alger 2), this dissertation is a straight continuation of the Stanford Literary Lab's efforts to debunk literary research from the askance against Distant Reading, the incorporation of cognitivism in the study of literary texts, and interdisciplinary digital studies. These rising theories refute close and unilateral reading and plead for the extension of understanding beyond the textual evidence.

The rediscovery of *Starship Troopers* allows its reconsideration as a utopian project of the 1950s that does not match the common depictions of ideal societies. The novel belongs to a series named the *Heinlein Juveniles* (Williamson, *Youth Against Space: Heinlein's Juveniles Revisited*, 1978). The latter is a collection of youth-oriented science fiction works. The novel was rejected by the editor (Scribner's) because of its excessive militarism. Half utopia; half dystopia: the novel is based on the memoirs of a first person narrator: Juan Rico. The latter accounts for his service as a sergeant (then a lieutenant) in interstellar wars: the war opposing the Earthen Federation to Aliens (The Bugs). *Starship Troopers* contains also a destabilizing documented dialogue between an instructor Jean V. Dubois and a young Juan Rico on the beauty of totalitarian regimes. Jean V. Dubois' speeches provide the novel with core and depth and make of *Starship Troopers* a coming of age novel superposed on the education of a soldier. The overtones of the narrative contain a troubling discourse

tainted with crypto-fascism: lessons in history, moral philosophy, and politics. Spread all over the novel, these moments are the most incandescent and provocative verbal exchanges. Presented in the form of a moral philosophy courses, the sporadic exchanges contain the supposed ideological DNA of Heinlein. Therefore, I assume that there might be latent dissonance between the author and the context (post war rehabilitation) and among the author's readership. In the case of this fiction, the context displays the following characteristics: post Fascism traumas, McCarthyism, and the rise of the Hippie movement. These antagonistic elements have shaped a tormented era, in which a novel despising pacifism was published. *Starship Troopers* is also a film version on a historical material; a sort of testimony of a cultural area in the midst of political and existential turmoil conjugated with futuristic projections of America's 'friendly fascism'. Ed Neumeier and Paul Verhoeven's radical rendition has provoked unanimous condemnations as to its glorification of Nazi iconography and the mockery they make of patriotism. After the 09/11 WTC attacks, the film was reappraised as a satire, and the film detractors understood that the narrative has only been transposed to growing 'friendly fascism' of the US culture.

This double ascertainment validates one contextual fact: The author's ideology was assimilated to the statements of Jean V. Dubois. There was confusion between the author and the narrator – amplified by the clash between Heinlein's reputation as a libertarian (*Stranger in Strange Land*, *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*). The strong militarist tone in *Starship Troopers* nurtures doubts about the meaning of the novel, as well as the intention of the writer. Finding out the origin of this ambiguity is a crucial point in this dissertation. The absence of certainty in interpretative models fosters doubt about the way how to approach the narrative. The construction of a meaning is highly context –dependent, and any attempt to study the novel would not only involve a close reading of the text, but also giving a particular attention to the legacy of Fascism and Nazism: the painful reminiscences of the tragedies caused by fascism harden the acceptance of a supposed fascist discourse.

Often labeled as a 'fascist utopia', Heinlein's novel prompts a series of additional questions on his standpoints: Did he intend it? Or was it a cognitive bias related to an aberrant reception? Why are his other novels (*Stranger in a Strange Land*

and *the Moon is a Harsh Mistress*) hailed by pacifists? In this novel, there are moral and semantic conflicts that cannot only be settled with textual analysis. Any literal approach of the discourse will lead to cognitive bias. Fallacies about the discourse are shortcuts resulting from these confusions. The fact that there is a strong fascist resonance does not sustain the fascism of the author, but a divergent form of thinking of the narrator. Nevertheless, those who use the oxymoron ‘fascist utopia’ to describe the narrative display a potential condition of cognitive dissonance.

Introduced by Leon Festinger (*The Story of Psychology - When Prophecy Fails*, 1957), Cognitive Dissonance Theory attempts to explain the origins of conflictive psychological tensions within an individual, or between the individual and society. Cognitive actions involving beliefs, judgments, decision making, and post-decision regrets are amongst the areas of interest of this branch of social psychology. Beyond its natural area of expertise, this theory is commonly endorsed in education, economics, and neurosciences. Permanent tensions in people’s psyches lead to tensions in decision making and actions. Festinger explains it as an uncomfortable condition induced by the opposition of two cognitions: one embodied in steady beliefs and another incarnated in conducts (actions) that are diametrically antagonistic to the so-called beliefs (p. 407). Cognitive dissonance, thus, is a condition that one can observe on living subjects, at the moment of decision making. The conflicts between thoughts and acts incarnate this bias. In literature, it can be observed through the writing coherence of an author or his inconsistencies. Moreover, it can be diagnosed within the critical reception of a work.

From a methodological angle, what I propose, here, is an implementation of this concept to literary studies. While, the contributions of psychoanalysis are rooted in textual analysis, cognitive dissonance is ostensibly more concerned with the individual’s inner turmoil and their connections with social optics. Away from the introspection (Jungian and Freudian thought), Cognitive Dissonance Theory (CDT) is more involved in social dynamics and individual / group interaction. CDT is articulated around major paradigms. The most important are: belief disconfirmation paradigm: inadequacy of personal beliefs with concrete reality (denial); induced-compliance paradigm: a sort of stemmed and forced acceptance; free choice paradigm:

the difficulty of fully assuming a personal standpoint; effort justification paradigm: it consists in decreasing the “meaningfulness” of an objective. Collateral to these, cultural dissonance explains as the moral and physical distance between a person’s position in regard to mainstream culture and counterculture. It shows a person’s discomfort with the prevailing values of his cultural zeitgeist.

In Literature, confusion between the author and the narrator constitutes another embodiment of cognitive dissonance. The majority of Heinlein’s writings are unanimously hailed as libertarian and pacifist. Among the exceptions is *Starship Troopers*, which stands as rhetoric pledge for war and jingoism. Did Heinlein intend to convey an image of his “self” that does not match his real personality? Or did he intend to unfold a facet of his personality? Is that facet not implied in his other writings? A primary answer would refer to the concept of double consciousness (A concept of conflictive duality in African American identities – theorized by W.E.B. Dubois in *The Souls of American Folks*, 1903). It is also found in Orwell’s double think (*Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 1949 part 1, chapter 3, p.32). Dubois and Orwell foregrounded the notion of duality in narrative terms. Hence, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* illustrates how a central character (narrator) develops a dual mode of thinking. A schizophrenic outlook of the world: a sort of mechanism to justify the unjustifiable; in *1984*, it was oppression and despotism. Orwell (1949) notes that contradictory beliefs suspend clarity in action because they force individuals to synthesize the coexistence of two different realities: the first being objective and the second that is fantasized. This would result in cognitive dissonance: the denial of objective reality and the rationalization of fantasies; in other words: pure denial.

Once the conceptual underpinnings identified, there stands the theoretical framework. This work is positioned alongside the influence of the philosophy of Gadamer (*Truth and Method*, 1987). The contribution of Gadamer’s hermeneutics is visible through the attempts to interpret the meaning(s) of the novel. The point in adopting this hermeneutics (as a global approach) opens the possibility of extending interpretation of meanings to non-verbal signals in the text. Within these pages, Gadamer’s hermeneutics is not a method, or a research technique. In reality, it is a philosophical standpoint aiming at finding the “truth” about / in a literary material. The

departure from “classical” methods into a relative autonomy in knowledge and method constitute the essence of Gadamer’s view. Gadamer – himself – did not particularly envisage hermeneutics as a set of techniques. Thus, the sum of his contributions is found in the belief that interpreting and understanding passes by language, and only language.

Another tenant of hermeneutics, Frederic Jameson (*Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 1991) was another influence in my theoretical architecture- to a lesser extent. I was not fully inspired by his “hermeneutics”, but rather more with his theses on the incidence of his writings on postmodernism. These writings forced the rethinking of the literary material (*Starship Troopers*, and the other novels) as a product of late capitalism. Frederic Jameson and David Harvey’s works were ideological markers that made me question methodological choices: context-free vs. context based interpretation. Gadamer and Jameson refute the notion of a single perspective of history. For them, history is plural, varied, and illusive. Hence, contexts can be deceiving. David Harvey (1990) claims that there is no single reality, but a multitude of different realities that may coexist. Ephemerality, the non existence of the authentic self, and absence of continuity in historical progress are key concepts that Harvey advocates (*The Condition of Post Modernity. An inquiry into the origins of cultural change*, pp 41-44; 53-54). The postmodern as envisaged by Harvey and Jameson makes of a science fiction a product of capitalism. Compared to Reader’s Digest, Hollywood’s B-grade movies, and TV soaps, science fiction is the opportunity for all people to challenge all kinds of power discourse: race, gender, and sexuality. For Harvey, it is a counter-discourse that promotes the idea that people need to speak for themselves, in their own voice: a sort of pluralistic stance (1990:48). Jameson believes that science fiction is a vehicle that connotes people’s political fears and anxieties. A thin line separates this connotation from being a cultural product to a mere propaganda (1991:84). While science fiction may or may not have a meaning, Jameson believes that it might display external symptoms that are not intended: fear of the foreigners, apocalyptic dreads, and so on.

Multiple readings of Fredric Jameson amplified the quasi-certainty that an exclusive hermeneutic implementation of the representations and phantasms on

Heinlein's works could be laborious and fruitless. Jameson sustains that there is no primacy of a linguistic code or hermeneutics, and thus no interpretation could be secured or validated (1991:163). Therefore, there shall be a methodological gap between hermeneutics as an abstract conception of meaning, and some psycholinguistic-based protocols that might ground my thesis. Then, the gradual interconnections between the socio-historical and other context-free approaches seem to open gates to interdisciplinarity.

The socio-historical approach - a blend of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and New Historicism - was envisaged for the construction of a primary answer to the following questions: is Heinlein culturally dissonant? The question is crystallizing attention at any reading of the novel, and the rest of Heinlein's oeuvre. The assessment of *Starship Troopers* will be in regard to narrative techniques and discourse levels. CDA is grounded on the belief that texts are the product of contexts. Foucault (1969) admits that discourse is not the language of individual communication, but a wide system of thoughts written in a particular historical setting. The latter make some things "thinkable" and "sayable" and regulating who can say them (in *Archeology of Knowledge*). Gee (*Discourse Analysis: What Makes it Critical?*, 2004) distinguishes two forms of discourse analysis: descriptive discourse analysis - mainly linguistic and structure-oriented, and critical discourse analysis - applied and more political. The three selected novels of Heinlein will be submitted to a Foucauldian macro-analysis of how discourse in many forms construct what is possible for an individual to think and say (Hodges et al:57).

This approach will establish a socio-historical synthesis of the late 1950s and the 1960s. These times correspond to the liberation of several subcultures culminating at the birth of the Civil Rights March and the Hippie Movement. Then, if there is any "historical particularism" (Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory: A History of Theories of Culture*, 1968) in the novel and its historical context, it will be highlighted. On the other hand, the disproportional divide between the morals of the 1950s/1960s United States culture and the provocative cultural model suggested in the book induces moral panics and volatile phantasms about fascism and militarization. One clear instance of the cultural distance is found in the attack of the WASP lifestyle:

Starship Troopers is multi-ethnic, speaking to all religions (the *Holy Quran* is cited for instance), and vaguely anti-bourgeois. Though, anti-war militants despise the novel, there is a common ground between the novel's discourse and the utopian project of the Hippies. This is clearly seen in the despicable attitude towards bourgeoisie which condemns moral depravity and unlimited personal liberties.

The "Trilogy of Liberty and Self Responsibility" will be studied chronologically. The goal is tracing and detecting of items that would enable to say whether or not there is an inconsistency in the discourse. As stated earlier, each culture has a time marker; the values and perceptions follow an irrational curve. The fluctuation of meaning is highly contextual: what is "fascist" in a given time would become "patriotic" in other times. Thus, within one cultural area, there might be dissonant discourses. These may overwhelm the mainstream discourse and become hegemonic. Clandestine ideas may emerge in Heinlein's texts. Ideological constructs are brought to the surface by constant questioning of the link between language and societal practices. Actually, a closer look at the material would unveil the way language is used to signify a societal system of beliefs (doxa). The textual properties mutate into a societal discourse (about being and not being), and corroborate the new historicist perspective. Reisigl and Wodak (2001:32) anchor existing claims about the massive bulk of societal constructs and discourse. The vast scope of sub-disciplines allowed by CDA is going to drag the work into other fields in which socio-cultural practice is enacted.

At this level, the socio-historical approach would reach its limits, and there will emerge the need for a complementary approach predicated on a context-free perspective. This choice spouses the methodological hiatus imposed by reception and responses to the narratives of Heinlein. Thus, by taking a focus on Suvin's cognitive estrangement, and subsequently instances of cognitive dissonance, I will resort to psychonarratology to mark the transition from the socio-historical paradigm to reception and readers' responses theories. In his book, *Towards a Semiotic Inquiry into the Television Message*, Umberto Eco (1972) refers to reception as aberrant decoding. The way readers understand a given text may completely differ from the author's intention; links are built between the reader and the author. The process of reading

implies a cognitive effort (shift from deep to surface structures) of making sense of the semes /narrems. Once mentally processed, the narrems interact with the reader's personal and cultural background. Hence, meaning is built on the grounds of a cultural heritage (personal and collective) through a cognitive process (reading and responding). The reception theory is a descendant of the reader-response theory. Both emphasize the role of interpretation. For Goldstein (*Post-Marxist Theory: an Introduction*, 2005), reader-response criticism appeals to the readers' interpretative skills instead of the author's intention or the text structure. The text, thus, would belong exclusively to the reader. The readers' self-appropriation of the text is up to sustain whether the writers' discourse has evolved or regressed (p. 346). The call upon reader-response theory would enable examining how Heinlein's novel can be read differently depending on the contexts and the background of the novel. Imagination is necessary to view utopianism in what is pure evidence of fascism in the literal meaning. A link with Umberto Eco's notion of "aberrant decoding" (1972) can provide a further area of reception. For Eco (op Cit), cultural differences explain the failure of decoding signs and symbols. The dissertation's thesis is to sustain the equally important role of cognitive dissonance in the process of reception/response. Roland Barthes has brilliantly theorized the obsolescence of the author. For him, reading is a logical extrapolation of concrete evidence: once a text is born it does not belong to its creator. The life of a piece of writing will continue as long as it is read. Author is destined to vanish, and all the traits of his personality gradually disappear. In *the Death of the Author* (1967), Barthes sustains that an author is likely to vanish all along the text (and probably via the process of reading). The sublimation (the shift from graphic text to cognitive constructs) is achieved through cognitive links closer to parental filiations (p. 4).

The case of *Starship Troopers* is no exception. Once liberated from the aura of its author, what remains is a text: a special focus on a long dialogue between (a father and a son) an old officer and a young soldier; scattered lessons in moral philosophy opposing the young soldier and his school teacher. As far as reader-response criticism is concerned, there is a possible reading of the narrative away from the initial situation and the initial context. The universal theme of rites of passage, blended with the

master-disciple relationship relates to all mankind. Timeless, the imparted knowledge transmitted from an old man to a young boy is a cognitive pattern that forces any reader to identify.

Context-free interpretation is counter-illustrated by Frederic Jameson (1981) as a will to purify discourse of its excrescences, liquidate the idols, go from drunkenness to sobriety, realize our state of poverty once and for all; on the other hand, to use the most "nihilistic," destructive, iconoclastic movement so as to let speak what once, what each time, was said, when meaning appeared anew, when meaning was at its fullest. Hermeneutics seems to me to be animated by this double motivation: willingness to suspect, willingness to listen: vow of rigor, vow of obedience (*The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, pp 284-198).

Reception and responses mutate into transactions through which readers shape their own meanings. According to Enani (1995), readers rework the text and create their own work of art. Naturally, like a translator does with a source text, the self-appropriation enlarges the scopes of reading, and provides ownership of the new reading (*Reception Theory*, p. 06). As explained by the scholar, the reader becomes implied and substitutes himself for the implied author; as if the reader becomes the own writer of what he is reading. The case of Edward Neumeier (the screenwriter) illustrates a casual reader's effort to transform the novel's narrative discourse into a cinematographic discourse – with the usual compromises of film adaptations impose shortcuts, ellipse, and allusions. Consequently, when the screenwriter struggles with the narrative, semantic units are dissembled and reassembled in a subjective coherence. Hence, the text is recaptured and cognitive dissonance would infiltrate the beliefs, appraisals, and judgmental choices. The reader-response pattern operates, and anonymous readers become ghost writers. Once the process of propriety transfer is achieved tensions rise on the tone to be given to the original text. While the role of the author diminishes, readers' actions take the turn and erect new semantic paradigms. The screenplay adaptation by Edward Neumeier illustrates a subjective appropriation of the original text, into a personal translation of the semantic units. Thus, reading generates other forms of the same text.

At a more concrete level, I will operate a junction of readers' responses theories with empirical and descriptive studies that are found in Odell and Cooper (*Describing Responses to Works of Fiction*, 1976); Purves and Beach (*Literature and the Reader*, 1976); Cooper (*Empirical Studies of Response to Literature: Review and Suggestions*, 1976); Cooper and Michalak (*A Note on Determining Response Styles in Research on Response to Literature*, 1981); Beach (*A Teacher's Introduction to Reader-Response Theories* 1993) and Dixon and Bortolussi (*Psychonarratology*, 2003). The discovery of these studies enabled me to view the study of cognitive dissonance within the readers' statements on their judgments of the narrative. The tardy discovery of Distant Reading Theories (Fish, Spivak, Moretti, and Underwood) shifted the focus and reoriented the thesis towards sentiment analysis of readers' responses. In the sketching of a complementary theoretical and methodological framework, I will implement the aforementioned theses to collect and analyze Heinlein's readership's postures towards *Starship Troopers*. This will be achieved through sentiment analysis.

Sentiment analysis is a branch of content analysis (CA). CA is the study of what is contained, while sentiment analysis (SA) is the study of standpoints, affects, and attitudes. This non-obstructive discipline accounts for features of the content (what, how and to whom?), inferences about the causes of the content (why?), and inferences about the effects of the content (Berelson, *Content Analysis in Communication Research*, 1952). Sentiment analysis can be associated to a socio-diagnostic critique according to Reisigl and Wodak, (*Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and Antisemitism*, 2000): A set text-driven inferences that deploy a set of linguistic theories to bring to the surface clandestine properties of text and discourse (p. 32). Beyond impressions, the works of Heinlein anchored a certain vision of societal beliefs colliding with personal beliefs. The perspective of naming inconsistently utopian or fascist any societal construct is a case of cognitive dissonance. Thus, responses-driven inferences (inspired from SA) may be associated with cognitive reception approaches (Holland, 1975, 1974; Iser, 1976; Herman, 1999...etc).

The corpus will be built upon a selection of readers' statements excerpted from the web forums. These forums constitute interpretive communities that unfold the

recipients' beliefs and judgments on Heinlein's narratives. I will use sentiment analysis software (NVIVO), as this device will help the identification and understanding of cognitive dissonances. In parallel, the most pertinent statements are classified according to the various models of readers' responses. The statements are manually organized through semantic partitioning and compiled into units of meaning. Once classified, the semantic units are submitted to contextual and referential interpretations. The fragmented statements are analyzed and interpreted. The goal is diagnosing and understanding the cases of cognitive dissonance and their scope. The results are to help the emergence of a different category of interpretive situations and cognitive biases' evidence: narrative constructs that distort and modify beliefs and judgments. The validation of the claims (regarding cognitive dissonance in utopian / fascist discourse) would be via the analysis of indices, symptoms and judgments found in the text (or meta-text), and discourse (Krippendorff, 2004).

This dissertation is structured into three parts which are subdivided into 6 chapters. The first part (theoretical) includes two chapters. The second part socio-historical contains two chapters. Part three deals with Distant Reading, sentiment analysis, and readers' responses.

PART ONE

The writer's socio-historical background and the thesis' theoretical and methodological scaffolding

This part is a socio-historical study of RAH's life and oeuvre. A special focus is made on the political and societal happenings of the Twentieth Century. This part includes the theoretical and methodological propositions.

CHAPTER I: Robert A. Heinlein, a Socio-Historical Context

This chapter is an overview of Robert A. Heinlein's life and literary works in socio-historical approach. Unanimously hailed as the 'Dean of Science Fiction', the writer belongs to the Golden age of SF or Hard Science Fiction (1930s- 1950s) i.e. the time in which the genre explored space conquest and the scientific-technological progress. This chapter highlights the political involvement of RAH and its reflection in his fictions. The variety and richness of his narrative themes range from alien invasion, to

ecological utopianism – passing by anarchism and libertarianism. Another point in this is attempting to know the writer and the ideas circulating in his time: understanding the mutations of the American culture (and the then world's) is crucial. While Heinlein's name is deeply rooted in the American collective unconscious, he remains vaguely notorious to worldwide readers. Only a few aficionados possess a certain awareness of the author's works and his ideological positioning in political science fiction. Heinlein's lifeline (1907 – 1988) made him a direct witness of the major political and cultural phenomena of the twentieth century.

In fact, he faced the rise of various forms of totalitarian ideologies (Stalinism, Nazism, and Fascism), McCarthyism, and Neo-imperialism. In addition, he witnessed space-conquest and the Hippie movement. In short, he captured the essence of Twentieth American culture (metaphorically or explicitly) in his oeuvre. Historical and political connections are established between the author and key happenings of the Twentieth Century: totalitarianism, the Cold War McCarthyism, and the Hippie movement. The aim is to understand the Twentieth Century's cultural zeitgeist and the extent of the influence of fascism / anti-fascism on his prose. While George Orwell (*Nineteen Eight-Four*) and Aldous Huxley (*A Brand New World*) have clear anti-totalitarian standpoints, Heinlein (their contemporary) has a more ambiguous position which will be verified with *Starship Troopers*. Though concerned with the American particularism (McCarthyism and the Counter Culture), Heinlein's fiction transcends time and place and has earned an international attention.

CHAPTER II: Cognitive dissonance, reception and responses: The Thesis's Theoretical Propositions and Methodological Scaffolding

This chapter deals with the theoretical and methodological scaffolding of the dissertation. Ground base theories are introduced and interwoven. The choice for interdisciplinary studies intends a threefold direction: historical, literary, and psycholinguistic. The socio-historical approach enables the contextualization of texts, and the observation of their mutations in and out of their original setting. The social, cultural and historical paradigms remain crucial in a primary attempt to decode the texts. The theories of Hans Gadamer and Stephen Greenblatt constitute the main foundations of this approach.

The conceptual underpinnings have encouraged the association of several literary and non-literary notions. Thus, preliminary readings of Darko Suvin demonstrate that the SF genre is particularly estranging and destabilizing as it asks readers to suspend logic and indulge in their own contradictions. Suvin's writings (*Of Starship Troopers and Refuseniks: War and Militarism in US Science Fiction, 2008* and *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre, 1979*) constitute a fundamental ground in the study of estrangement in the genre.

The psychological nexus of this cognitive estrangement is found in Leon Festinger's Theory of Cognitive Dissonance and Robert K Merton's Theory of Anomie (Cultural dissonance). This first theory explains the tension/conflict found within subjects that are torn between beliefs and actions. The second explains the in comfort of a subject towards his/her culture and its values. As far as Cognitive Dissonance Theory is concerned, as stated earlier, it is basically applicable on living subjects, acting in dynamic environments. The conflictive cognitions that might co-exist inside an author can never be seen, diagnosed, or quantified. However, what is affordable is the analysis of the corpus-based readers' written reactions. These constitute assets: concrete forms of literary reception. Therefore, a link is established between the concepts and psychonarratology. This emerging discipline is paired with cognitive narratology, author-reader contract, reception theory, and readers' responses theory. Telescoped theories and approaches are found in the works of Purves and Beach; Beach and Cooper, and Cooper and Michalak. The reviewed empirical and descriptive works serve for the building of this thesis' methodological framework on readers' responses.

PART TWO

The study of Heinlein's Trilogy of Liberty and Self Responsibility

This part substantiates the exposed theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of the novel. Three novels of Heinlein are studied with a major focus on the narremes and the themes. Furthermore, the film adaptation is introduced as a case of a

purposeful cognitive dissonance – in which the film makers distorted the narrative out of a conflict with the book’s fascistic overtone.

CHAPTER III: A Psychonarratological Analysis of *Starship Troopers*, *A Stranger in a Strange Land*, and *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*.

This chapter studies, chronologically, three of Heinlein’s Trilogy of ‘Liberty and Self-Responsibility’: *Starship Troopers*, *A Stranger in a Strange Land*, and *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*. Firmly considered by RAH as homogenous works, the three novels do contain cognitive and cultural dissonances within the continuum of his oeuvre. The three narratives have inconsistent thematic propositions such as militarism, libertarianism and anarchism. An early cognitive dissonance is, thus, diagnosed within the writer’s bibliography and a cultural dissonance is evidently pointed as to his ‘deviancy’ from the cultural and societal norms of the then-American context. *Starship Troopers* sustains a belligerent discourse in the late McCarthyism age; the time where the American society suffocated from oppression and where paranoia turned gangrenous. *A Stranger in a Strange Land* has inspired the tenants of the Hippie movement who made of the novel their pillow book. The novel’s discourse is diametrically opposed to the jingoistic tone of the previous. Finally, in *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, Heinlein gives his own rendition of the American Revolution – in a hymn for liberation and anarchist disobedience. The comparison of the three novels and their narremes does not comfort the claim of RAH that the narratives are consistently on the same concerns.

A priori a pamphlet for militarism, *Starship Troopers* (1959) is a novel that contrasts with his other works: violence and apology for authority. The novel exposes, through Rico’s eyes, the epic wars between humans and the “Bugs”, a ravenous species of outer space arachnids. Met with audience enthusiasm, the novel unleashed an unseen wave of criticism. The most critical passages are those in which Rico is taught history and political philosophy by his teacher Dubois. Slice by slice, Dubois exposes daring (regarding the historical period) standpoints on the usurpation of morals held by communism and even Western democracies: militarism, political conservatism, corporal punishment, and death penalty are approached differently. That

difference lies in the opposition to post WWII aspirations of anti-Fascism and anti-Nazism.

Stranger in a Strange Land (1961) is probably his most popular novel and his most influential, because of its legacy on American culture. Premonitory of the rise of the Hippie movement, the novel is the epic saga of Mike (the main protagonist) on the planet Mars, where mankind has settled. New generations of human beings were born and raised there. Heinlein narrates the coming of age of Valentine Michael Smith as the main protagonist raised by Martians. Vaguely inspired from Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, the aliens replaced the wolves in the education of the child. The novel was published first, in 1961, and republished posthumously in 1989. According to Virginia Heinlein (his spouse), that second version corresponds to her husband's vision. Heinlein was almost forced, by his editor, to downsize the excessive hedonism of the first version. *A Stranger in a Strange Land* hailed lust and free love. This novel is antithetical to his early works; a pillow book for Counter Culture. Beyond its cult status, the novel introduced a challenging construct: emancipation and liberation through hedonism. If one is to consider it as his signature work, why is *Starship Troopers* so "dissonant" from this anthem of the Hippie movement?

The Moon is a Harsh Mistress (1966) forces the issue of libertarianism into anarchism. The novel depicts the Moon (Luna) as a new colony, where political opponents, rebels, and leftovers are deported. The descendents of the first settlers established a libertarian social model based on plurality and racial diversity. The feelings of oppression were exported from earth, as the Lunars were forced to send their production to the central authority on Earth. The latter was ravaged by hunger and starvation. The story is narrated by Manuel, a computer assistant. The real central protagonist is a computer named Mike. This computer developed high artificial intelligence and decision-making autonomy. Heinlein portrayed the practices of a Lunar revolt against the Earth Federation. Anarchist discourse is a paramount feature of the narrative. Heinlein seems to amplify the libertarian tone (found in *A Stranger in a Strange Land*), and eager to introduce graphic violence to sustain his standpoint. This novel is an uplifting "essay" that is relatively close to a literary Punk spirit. Historically, the Hippie movement was at its top. Abruptly, a "disturbing" discourse of

anarchism is introduced by the author. I will attempt to understand the discursive fracture induced by this text.

CHAPTER IV: *Starship Troopers*' Reception: The Film, and the Rise of a New Criticism

This chapter focuses on the reception of *Starship Troopers* and its film adaptation by Paul Verhoeven. Factually, it is an instance in which a recipient (the filmmaker) admits his malaise with the original narrative, and how he struggles to fight against Heinlein's discourse. The Verhoeven – Neumeier version is a satirical rendition of the original material – including an exacerbation of the fascistic tendencies the 1990s' US culture. The movie establishes an intertextual appreciation of Heinlein's fiction : novel, screenplay, and film are three formats of storytelling. From the initial situation to the denouement, the narrative is worth observing. Film adaptation and screenplay work on the principles of narrem's collection. A screenwriter decides (subjectively) what seems he is to keep and what others to dismiss. The film adaptation was Edward Neumeier's craft. The text hypertrophied the militaristic tone and allowed the ventilation of fascistic narrem's all along the narrative.

The film reviewers have responded virulently against the movie; the reactions deplored the Nazi iconography and the Fascist propaganda. The reception of the film was radically different from the novel: the film achieved the tour-de-force of achieving unanimity within critics from left wing and right wing intellectuals. Too ironic for the firsts and too belligerent for the lasts, the exaggerated depiction of the US patriotic feelings and the systematic animalization of the enemies were judged as outrageous. What is noted is the presence of a discourse distortion which indicates a cognitive dissonance. The Reception theory and the reader-response theory enable the observation of the filmmakers' intention and the readers / viewer perceptions. Further, one may question the trajectory of the textual reception. Probably, there was a will to defend a progressive thesis by using reactionary arguments; in other words, the crafting of a utopian project underneath fascist foundations. In their intent statement, the filmmaker and screenwriter justify their view: the movie contains a double narrative; Heinlein's view and theirs. The historical concordance (09/11 and the War against Terror, for instance) permitted the reappraisal of the movie and the

understanding of the fascistic tendencies in the USA. The other merit of the film adaptation consists in the rise of new generation of readers and a Heinlein criticism. The corpus of criticism is an illustration of the professional and elaborate reception and responses of *Starship Troopers*. In fact, Heinlein has had an established reputation – reluctantly balancing between fascism to libertarianism. The analysis of the post film criticism reveal that modern critics (2000 – 2015) have departed from the controversy about the fascism or anti-fascism postures of the author, and moved towards more contemporary issues related to modern day readers: gender, race, otherness, and so on. Other scholars have introduced the notion of friendly fascism to describe Heinlein’s prose and the Right Wing trends in utopian SF.

PART III

The Fascist Utopia through Readers’ Lenses and Responses

This part is a transition from scholarly reception of Heinlein’s narratives (and especially *Starship Troopers*) to casual readers’. The aim is to detect cognitive dissonance in the use or not of the term fascist utopia; to identify the extent of contradictions, and verify the transmissibility between the author and his readers.

CHAPTER V: *Starship Troopers* and cognitive dissonance: a methodological framework of Distant Reading and sentiment analysis

This chapter accounts for the belated theoretical and methodological tools to the study of cognitive dissonance in readers’ responses. The accomplishment of an insightful analysis of readers’ responses demands a supplementary set of ideas and approaches that I found within Stanley Fish’s concept of interpretive communities and Distant Reading Theory. The latter envisions literature as a decompartmentalized discipline that can be implemented within a digital perspective. Thus, I introduced sentiment analysis as a tool to analyze beliefs, judgments and decisions encompassing the supposed fascism of Heinlein and *Starship Troopers*. The conjuncture consisting in the symmetry between the film release and the democratization of readers’ comments on the web has directed the attention to web forums as sentiment corpus in which contradictions, inconsistencies, and tensions can be found. The corpus is based on web search of semantic tags (Heinlein, *Starship Troopers*, fascism, and utopia). Once constituted, the forum will be prepared, amended, and adapted in terms of pertinence

to the leading opinion. I selected seven forums with and without opinion holders: they have in common the question of Heinlein's supposed fascism in *Starship Troopers*. Obviously, only the significant statements are retained and classified in terms of the exposed theories of Purves et al. NVIVO is envisaged to sketch the thematic contents of the forum and to unveil the readers' attitudes towards Heinlein and his novel.

There is a hypothetical cognitive construct achieved through the sentiment analysis of readers' linguistic determinisms. The belief in Fascist utopianism (denoting cognitive dissonance) is disseminated within a range of linguistic behaviors some of them enforce the confusion on identity of the intention of the sender of the message, as well as his identity: narrator or author? Other questions emerge: how does the reception of the supposed fascism operate? Does Heinlein's construct possess the same intended effect on nowadays readers? Do readers' reactions to the text fluctuate in discontinuity with the tone of Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*? When anchored in today's historical and cultural contexts, the attention of casual readers may be distracted to other thematic concerns. The historical legacy of fascism was a trauma for the USA. Heinlein – as an anti-conformist writer - testifies of the conflictive desire to forget the past and make idealistic future plans for the next generations. For the millennial readers, fascism is an abstract concept to which they do not neither relate nor measure the symbolic weight.

CHAPTER VI: The Fascist Utopia and Cognitive Dissonance, a Sentiment Analysis

This chapter explores, in detail, the readers of *Starship Troopers*' responses and their expressed sentiments. The following forums were selected and analyzed: Straight Dope Message Board For Sci-Fi fans: Was Robert Heinlein a Fascist? (2001); Blasting Bugs is more Complicated than you Think by Sam Jordison, (2008); Robert A. Heinlein? A Sci-Fi Genius? Or an Old Fascist Pervert? (2009); I Believe that the Fascist Society presented in Robert Heinlein's book *Starship Troopers* doesn't seem all that bad – CMV : Changed my View (2014) ; Robert A Heinlein makes Fascism Seem Attractive (2017), and Did Heinlein Advocate the Apparently Militaristic, if not Fascist Society of *Starship Troopers*? Stack Exchange: Science Fiction and Fantasy (2017). The forums are considered as interpretive communities in which

interpretations and opinions (even hidden beliefs) are confronted. The significant statements are outlined and explained in regard to cognitive dissonance.

The analysis of the readers' statements reveals a broad extent of cognitive dissonance within the readers of *Starship Troopers*. It is more clearly embodied within recipients who express positive, neutral, or mixed sentiments towards the writer and his novel. The most observed variants are autobiographical digressions, denial, escapism, and contrast. Within the pro Heinlein readers, there are indices of cognitive dissonance since this layer does not revise its judgments even when presented new evidence or different reading levels. All readers display other forms of cognitive biases in relation to judgments, decisions, and post-decision regrets. These fallacies are listed and indexed according to their occurrence and semantic concordance in the expressed statements. Another finding concerns the substitution of the term fascist utopia for friendly fascism. Less antithetical, friendly fascism is not clearly expressed but inferred from the fact that the majority of readers are comfortable with the novel's most controversial themes. The cultural zeitgeist of the recipients makes Right Wing ideologies popular and consensual. Furthermore, this section points out the virality of Heinlein's ideas and his prophetic views on latent fascistic trends and their eventual growth in the USA.

Heinlein's novels and the film adaptation constitute the object of study. Their reviews and readers' statements compose the corpus. Diagrams, tables, and figures are used to illustrate and validate my proposition.

PART ONE

The writer's socio-historical background and the thesis' theoretical and methodological scaffolding

Introduction to Part One

Part one studies Robert A. Heinlein's socio-historical context through two paradigms: his life illustrated through his literary evolution and the 20th Century's political and cultural happenings. Heinlein is a historical product of a changing American culture that was torn between isolationism and expansionism in regard to the fall of the European democracies under the Fascist and Bolshevik threats. The writer's political commitment was that of an unfortunate candidate to the local legislative assembly who found an outlet to his frustrations in writing 'speculative fiction'; his own view of Science Fiction. Heinlein exalted the hatred of Communism in his *Juveniles* and *Starship Troopers*, and reactivated his activism by becoming the intellectual leader of neoconservative fiction writers. Aided by the prevalence of McCarthyism over the current thought, he incarnated the fight against the Reds. Heinlein made a surprising move by publishing *A Stranger in a Strange Land* and buried his ancient standpoints with an instant classic that accompanied the rise of the Hippie Movement.

Contradictive to the core, Heinlein and his fictions unfold a characterized cognitive dissonance. The study and the understanding of narratological cognitive dissonance remains a complex task which appeals to the use of an interdisciplinary framework in which would merge psychonarratology, reception theory and readers' response studies. The paroxysm of the paradoxical discourse urged the study of actual readers' reception and response to his narrative *Starship Troopers*. The interwoven montage of a theory of a cognitively dissonant narratology and the way it impacts the readers in their cognitive reception and verbal responses will constitute the methodological matrix of the study. Evenly, the theoretical framework will raise subsidiary questions that will be answered in the practical part.

CHAPTER I

Robert A. Heinlein, a Socio-Historical Context

Introduction

Robert Anson Heinlein is one of the most controversial authors of science fiction. His notoriety is predicated on both literary innovations (themes, settings, and narratological standpoints) and on philosophical-political propositions. Paired with the Isaac Asimov and Arthur C Clark (named the ‘Big Three’), he attested of the renewal of the genre. Heinlein has insufflated a wind of change over a genre that was debunked by the growth of readers. That was the beginning of SF’s Golden Age (also known as Hard Science Fiction). Scott Bukatman (1993) outlines the creativity of Heinlein despite his underrated status:

Hard science fiction has always demonstrated a disdain for more traditional literary values, and certainly the "cardboard" characters peopling the works of Heinlein and Asimov are not only a part of their charm, but an important aspect of science fiction as a genre of philosophical, rather than psychological¹ (p. 138).

Heinlein excelled in the art of implementing philosophical innovations to spotlight his curious choices and edgy prose. In addition, he possessed a sense of provocation that he exploited to his full advantage. His fictions mirrored the burgeoning cauldron of political and societal changes in the Twentieth Century America.

This chapter examines the life and works of Robert A. Heinlein in regard to his cultural legacy. The second section presents an overview of the socio-historical context that encompassed his life and narratives. The point is to understand the context of literary creation and highlight his contradictions, or cognitive dissonance.

I.1. Robert A. Heinlein, a biography

Heinlein was born in Butler, Missouri (1907) but spent his childhood in Kansas City, Missouri. He grew up in the Bible Belt - surrounded by a deep puritan culture. In

¹ See: Scott Bukatman’s *Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction*. 1993

there, he has witnessed the resurrection of massive religious rebirth all over the inland areas of the USA. This revival has been particularly spectacular in idle locations like his native town, and his early residence in the mid-west. The geographic rigidity and the moral toughness of his early childhood have affected his life and certainly molded the ideas he was attributed. Heinlein's early life carried the germs of his adult life to be. However, he has operated an intellectual metamorphosis: from a provincial conservative writer, in his early beginnings, into a progressive humanist toward the end of his life. Young Heinlein showed interest in astronomy and has read a considerable number of science fiction books from Jules Verne to H. G. Wells².

After a somber high school passage, Heinlein joined the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. After three years of training he graduated from the Academy in 1929, and enrolled as an officer in the United States Navy until 1934. The Same year, he was diagnosed a pulmonary tuberculosis, and was declared inapt for the Navy's missions. Heinlein went through a long period of self-reconstruction. He often referred to this life-slice as one culminant point in his existence; times where he took time to meditate, rest, and envision his life outside the Army. Nevertheless, his persistent ghosts of an unfulfilled mission in the military haunted him. Beyond the growing fascination for the institution, he felt concerned with the ensemble of value it poured on its subjects: righteousness, loyalty, obedience and abnegation. A considerable amount of these ideals permeated in his craft when writing *Starship Troopers*.

Heinlein settled in Los Angeles and joined UCLA and envisaged a political career. He run for the local assembly for a socialist movement (EPIC) and lost the election. Heinlein discovered a writer's contest organized by the SF magazine *Thrilling Wonder Stories*. Heinlein sketched his first story *Lifeline* (1939) but it was rejected by the magazine, as it was judged above the editorial standards (Patterson, 1999). Heinlein sent it the editor of *Astounding Science-Fiction* John Campbell, Jr. who published it. Thus, began a two-year collaboration, but it was interrupted by

²See: William H. Patterson, Jr's *Robert A. Heinlein, a biography*. Excerpted from a longer version that originally appeared in The Heinlein Journal, Issue 5, July 1999. The Heinlein Society - 2010.
<http://www.heinleinsociety.org/rah/biographies.html>

Campbell's rejection of a supernatural narrative. After a short retirement, Heinlein accepted to make changes and reedited the story which was published under the title *Goldfish Bowl* (1942).

Heinlein married Elinor Leah Curry in 1929, and divorced one year later. He remarried, in 1932, to Leslyn McDonald. Heinlein's life with Leslyn were years of conjugal bliss and lusty passion. Nevertheless, her chronic alcoholism ended up crashing their marriage, in 1946. While staying in Los Angeles, Heinlein contacted, Virginia Gerstensfeld (an old acquaintance) and convinced her to enroll in UCLA and they married in 1948. Heinlein found certain stability with Virginia, who is said to be his muse, and at the origin of his self-actualization. Robert and Virginia decided to move to Colorado Springs for the sake of pursuing Heinlein's writing career in a quieter location. Simultaneously, he began an association for Scribner's with his renowned series: "The Juveniles". Heinlein wrote his first script for cinema, *Destination Moon*, (1949) and entered the arena of celebrities. In the 1950s, Robert and Virginia returned to public life, and frequented mundane circles: they befriended: Isaac Asimov, Brian Aldiss, L Ron. Hubbard³, and other notorious figures of the cultural scene.

Heinlein was worried by the turn of WWII, and felt growing anxieties, as to the course of events. According to Patterson (1999) he was ready to be recalled as a reservist, but he was dismissed because of his health issues. Heinlein wrote *Beyond this Horizon* (1942), a story on a eugenics-based utopia where guns regulate societal contentions. This was Heinlein's answer to the totalitarian drifts in Europe. After WWII, he felt the Cold War was an even greater challenge to Western democracies. The 1952 presidential campaign confirmed his fears: the election of Dwight B. Eisenhower urged an appeasement of the nuclear escalation between the USA and the USSR. Meanwhile, he earned the first academic recognition (Hugo Award⁴) for his paranoid novel *Double Star* (1956). This fiction illustrated identity usurpation and political aspirations. It was, then seen, as a parody of McCarthyism.

³The founder of the Church of Scientology.

⁴A yearly ceremony (since 1953) awarding the best SF writer in the US.

Wrathful, Heinlein published a pamphlet⁵ *Who Are the Heirs of Patrick Henry*⁶ in which he declaims the weak positions of his nation towards the Red Scare. This coincided with the discovery that his house is set in the perimeter of potential foreign attacks, Heinlein built a bunker and took refuge inside it. There, he exorcised his innermost fears in writing *Starship Troopers* (1959)⁷. Heinlein's novel provoked an immediate general indignation: conservatism, militarism, and apologia for fascism were some of the most recurrent qualifications attributed to the narrative. Yet, the novel was a popular success, and was awarded the Hugo Prize. William H. Patterson, his official biographer, considers that: "*Starship Troopers* does what science fiction does best when it is at its best: it challenges the reader to re-think his basic assumptions" (1999). The then-readers made a similar statement in buying the book massively.

Years of work enabled Heinlein to publish his most popular work: *A Stranger in a Strange Land* (1962). Though heavily censored⁸, the novel is at the antipodes of his previous works. It celebrated tolerance, love, peace, and contained a universal message of otherness. The perfidy insects of his previous narrative ceded the place for benevolent Martians who sent a savior to Terrans. Hailed by the critics and the readers, the book mesmerized the Hippies and became their fetish book. Heinlein won another Hugo (his third), and attracted the attention of a new category of readers. The New York Times regularly lists it as one of the most significant works of fiction of the 20th Century. He followed back with *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* (1966) which confirmed his public and critical success, and gratified him with his fourth Hugo.

Heinlein and his spouse left Colorado Springs and toured the US in search of a new home. They settled in Santa Cruz, California. These years were the years of space conquest and Neil Armstrong's landing on the Moon. Heinlein was invited by the NASA to comment the event, and share his vision with other SF contemporary writers. He will be later appointed as a consultant for CACNSP⁹. His health started to

⁵ In *Expanded Universe*. Riverdale: Baen, 2003, pp324–329 (Originally published by Ace Books, 1980).

⁶ Patrick Henry (1736–1799), one of the founding father of the American Revolution, fervent defender of sovereignty and absolute democracy, against state interference.

⁷ See Ridley Scott's documentary: *Prophets of Science Fiction: Robert A. Heinlein*, Season 01, Episode 07 2012.

⁸ The uncensored version was published by Virginia Heinlein in 1991, after her husband's death

⁹ Citizen Advisory Council on National Space Policy.

deteriorate in the early 1970s and was forced to retire from public life. Though he did not quit writing (*Time Enough for Love*, 1973 and *the Number of the Beast*, 1981), he was more involved in fund raising for charity events, such as blood drives. He resumed his fiction writing career in 1981 with the publication of *Friday* (1982). Though radical and uncompromising, the novel was a critical acclaim. In 1984, he published *Job: a Comedy of Justice*. The novel examines themes apocalypse and heaven in an acid way.

He published his last novel *To Sail beyond the Sunset* in 1987. This narrative is the final chapter of the adventures of Lazarus Long, a serialized character in Heinlein's fiction¹⁰ whose age is around 2000 years and who possesses the ability to travel through time and space. Long is an alter ego of Heinlein: rebel, slinger, and free-spirited. Heinlein closed his fiction with unsuspected optimistic note:

Whom you sleep with, whom you make love with, is your private business. Ishtar, as our family geneticist, controls pregnancy and progeny to whatever extent control is needed for the welfare of our children. So we all joined hands in the presence of our children (of course Pixel was there!) and we pledged ourselves to love and cherish our children-those around us, those still to come, worlds without end. And we all lived happily ever after. (p. 425)

Heinlein's last novel is a testimonial of residual beliefs in Hippie values sprinkled with eugenics apologia. Contradictive in his last days, the writer cultivated the art of provocation by making opposites coexist in one statement: tolerance and selection.

Robert Heinlein died on May 8th 1988, after a long struggle with malady. He devolved an oeuvre of 32 novels and 59 short stories. He has profoundly marked the US culture by his vivid criticism of his epoch and his distainable, yet entertaining fictions. George Slusser, a Heinlein scholar, delivered a poignant homage to the

¹⁰ This character appeared previously in *Methuselah's Children* (1941 and 1958), *Time Enough for Love* (1973), *The Number of the Beast* (1980) and *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls* (1985).

'Dean' of science fiction. This testimony¹¹ reflects what he meant to the average American reader:

During that Tuesday, I tried to sift out what Heinlein meant to me. First people called me from newspapers to get some quick information about this "acclaimed SF writer." Journalistic memory went back to the hippies and Stranger and Manson. There were the inevitable questions. "Was Heinlein really a good writer?" "If I liked him, why?" I found myself saying things like: he put me on the Moon, he let me live in Luna City, he put me on a spaceship with the real Rolling Stones. Not the sort of "literary things" they wanted to hear (1988: 325).

Bequeathed fragments of fantasy and mind transportation is what comes to the mind of Slusser when he recalls Heinlein. In this respect, Heinlein did contribute to the actual shaping of a collective literary fund of readers' manipulation, to the extent that a scholar like Samuel Schuman (1973) associates him with another figure of 20th century literature: Vladimir Nabokov¹².

I.1.1. Heinlein, the cultural and literary legacy

The 'Big Three' (Robert A. Heinlein, Isaac Asimov and Arthur C. Clark) formed the SF equivalent of Beat Generation with more or less avowed nihilism. They accompanied the rise of the 'Golden Age' of science fiction (1939-1959) and the debunking of the genre out to the mainstream culture. As the 'Dean of Science Fiction' to be, he published *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961). It was the first science-fiction book to become a national best-seller; it attracted profane readers who were not especially committed to science fiction, and established a precious notoriety so coveted by others. The American readers began to read beyond the lines, and smelled a strange fragrance: the book was not only storytelling, but contained thick strips of

¹¹ Source: George Slusser's *Notes and Correspondences*, "Robert Anson Heinlein, 1907-88." *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1988, pp. 385-386.

¹² See Samuel Schuman's *Vladimir Nabokov's Invitation to a Beheading and Robert Heinlein's "They"*. In *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Apr., 1973), pp. 99-106

philosophical teachings and announced the Hippie culture. The scope of the novel rose above the SF standards: no robots, no artificial intelligence, and monster-free; the novel set the foundations of counter culture, Hippie thought, pacifism, and advertised universal freedom and brotherly love.

Back in his life, Heinlein fed his desires by joining the US troops, during WWII. His experience in Navy maneuvers earned him an envied position within the staff. But he was sent in the aeronautical department. He was never sent to front, and felt frustrated by this restriction. He admitted that *Starship Troopers* was predicated on teleological thought, i.e. what could, should, and would have been if he was on the front. He felt the need to compensate this frustration, so he returned to writing, immediately after he finished his service. The growing appetite for pulps and SF led him to work for Mustin Field (a naval air facility). There he gave his chance to another brilliant pen of science fiction, alias Isaac Asimov. About his mentor, Asimov reports the souvenirs of a man that is calm, articulate, and extremely creative. Though politically opposed, the future writer of *I. Robot* gratifies Heinlein with acknowledgements and homage¹³.

Heinlein affined his craft, and unintentionally focused on youth fiction (*The Juveniles*). Later, he emphasized on the transition from adolescence to adulthood. He was widely read by parents and teenagers. The themes he developed were a delicate blend of generations clash in a familial setting. American readers (drowning in the 1950's crisis of values¹⁴) found comfort and entertainment in Heinlein; he synthesized the father figure, and the prodigal son. Heinlein's etiquette was, hence, defined as an author who writes about very clever teenagers who learn the rules of the game (life in community, coming of age, melting within the mold). In their path, they are to cope with narrow-minded teachers, deaf-blind adults, and peers' competition. Heinlein had to justify the juvenile nature of his writings. Many editors accused him of making exploitative literature for the sake of selling books. He retaliated by affirming that young readers possessed the necessary sophistication and cultural background to handle his thematic obsessions.

¹³ See: the autobiography of Isaac Asimov, *I, Asimov: A Memoir*, 1994.

¹⁴ McCarthyism, suburban segregation, and the heavy moralist atmosphere characterize the 1950's. The birth and success of Rock n' Roll was an epidemic response to authoritarianism and social hypocrisy.

The stories crafted by Heinlein enabled his real ambitions to resurface: questioning youth existence and confront them, timelessly, to maturity and growth; two things that could be handled by adults. His works are to become accessible to adult audience, once they accept to go underneath the shallow glazed shell; they disclose treasures of elusive hide-and-seek semantic possibilities. This is especially true concerning the “Juvenile” controversial novel *Starship Troopers*. Thus, contemporary adult readings of *Starship Troopers* (1959) is seen as a response to the stopping of nuclear testing, whereas a candid book as shallow is its title *Red Planet* (1949) which tells very risky things: incitation to student violence, the overthrowing of governments called on the French Revolution. His editor requested major changes as concerns the multiple discourse on violence, involving the use of guns by teen characters. Moreover, conservative members of the board of review were outraged by the queer sexuality of the Martian protagonist.

Robert Heinlein expressed the greatness of his genius in more adult-oriented novels moved towards maturity (*Stranger in a Strange Land*, 1961 and *Time Enough for Love*, 1973). The complexity of the exposed themes boosted the writer into the category of well respected authors. Yet readers chill at the thought of his past provocations. Heinlein had probably understood that “grand guignol¹⁵” and rawness are not necessary serviceable for a sophomore writer. Thus, he tuned to other concerns related to the grown-ups. Consequently, there was a resurgence of complex depictions of individualism, libertarianism, and the eternal theme of clash between body and soul in love affairs.

Readers and critics pain to trace the logical chain through which Heinlein modified his temper, and reputation of dumb writer into a humble author publishing thought-provoking debates, in a genre which has been largely under-evaluated. This maturity is attributed to Heinlein’s considerable advance upon his time. His visionary works were unfit for a decade as rigid as the 1950s: both audiences and publishers developed a mounting discomfort when they are handled a distorting mirror¹⁶, and

¹⁵ Literally big puppet, a French expression referring to an eponym French theatre specialized in staging violent and bloody plays. The expression is, now used in film and literary criticism to address similar approaches in raw violence representation.

¹⁶ A role played by science fiction.

forced to look inside it. He did not concede to publish *Stranger in a Strange Land* until after seven years passed after it was written. The ideas of free love¹⁷ and ragged individualism are highly stressed in his long-time censored first novel, *For Us, the Living: A Comedy of Customs* (1938, published in 2003).

First conceived as a twisted account on urban spaces and the desire of emancipation, *A Stranger in a Strange Land* raised a scandal involving rumors that it was the pillow-book of the infamous Charles Manson¹⁸. Nevertheless, the fiction happened to have served the individualistic claims of the American society. Christopher Lockett¹⁹ (2007) explains that Heinlein's narratives (*The Puppet Masters*, 1952 and *A Stranger in a Strange Land*, 1962) meet the aspirations of the 1950s youth:

Cold War era's crucial cultural paradoxes: the celebration of American individualism against communist collectivism, which found its obverse in the increasing pressure toward social conformity, consensus, and domesticity in American middle-class life (2007: 42).

Heinlein's ideas did not appease the ubiquitous attacks against his political tendencies. He acknowledges the full absence of dissociation between himself as a persona and the themes of his works. In his book *To Sail Beyond the Sunset* (1987), Heinlein's Maureen (the main protagonist) disserted on the role of metaphysics; a science which is concerned with existence: Why are we here? What happens when we die? The heroin transcribes her Pygmalion's thoughts on the sharp clash opposing religion to metaphysics; which is more apt to claim authentic truth propriety?

Heinlein is an author who left an indelible trace his indexed exploration of all the shades of the political spectrum. His first novel, *For Us, The Living*, is a

¹⁷ Seen by the puritan thought as incitation to use contraceptive pills, and a manifest of debauchery.

¹⁸ Charles Manson is a superstar serial killer who has become an American icon. In the late 1960s, Manson founded a counter-culture Hippie community called "the Family" whom he initiated into brutal homicidal acts done on his behalf. He declared that *The Catcher in the Rye* (J. D. Salinger, 1952) was also another favorite narrative.

¹⁹ Christopher Lockett. Domesticity as Redemption in "The Puppet Masters": Robert A. Heinlein's Model for Consensus. *Science Fiction Studies* Vol. 34, No. 1 (Mar., 2007), pp. 42-58

constructed discourse, well thought, and pretty insightful, on the need for social utilitarianism. In one of his earlier works – a novella entitled *Misfit* (1939) - he defies the Roosevelt administration in running military service and civilian enrollments in the military. *Stranger in a Strange Land* was hailed by the “peace and love” pioneers and their rejects. The novel is often cited as a paramount anti-war reference; Heinlein’s firm opposition of the Korean War, and all forms of armed imperialism. The Novel’s message is covered in *Glory Road* (1963). The irreverence is clearly stated against the US interventionist policy. In his pacifist fictions, War is subjected to a negative representation. He has the ability to disgust the most belligerent mind to go for an act of war.

The *Starship Troopers* case is in all ways antagonistic to his pro-peace novels. The core of the militaristic thought in *Starship Troopers* was enhanced in *To Sail Beyond the Sunset* (1987). This time there was a complete osmosis between Heinlein and the conservative Reagan administration. The novel was strictly right-winged. The gimmick “wetbacks”, used and referenced in the novel, refers to the name coined by the Reagan’s allies (The neo-conservatives) to name the illegal immigrants. Somewhere in Heinlein’s tormented intellectual contradictions, there are significantly constant political and ideological preoccupations that have never oscillated. The most prominent is his attachment to libertarianism; *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* (1966) is a clear evidence of a refined worship of personal freedom, and lifeline assumed-choices. There is a constant motive in his youth-oriented novels: intertwined messages against authority, patriarchy, and moralizers. In his first full-length published novel *Rocket Ship Galileo* (1947), a group of college students organized an extreme-left-type mission consisting in destroying a spaceship by defiance to a judge. The same motive is squished in *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*; the despotic Lunar Authority (running the Moon colony) is diabolized to the extreme. Its name is seldom uttered; it is simply called “the Authority”.

Another constant thing in Heinlein’s thought is the undeniable belief in secularism, as well as the excessive ecumenical drifts of pop culture. In *A Stranger in a Strange Land* (1962) and *Job A Comedy of Justice* (1984), he overtly stigmatizes the messianic attitude of the religious mandarins. Eventually he ended creating a possible

future²⁰ in which the USA would become a dictatorship. Heinlein was constantly unapologetic and unashamed by his contradictions, and he continued to praise the beauty of the military (*Between Planets 1951*, *Red Planet 1949*). He went on putting forward qualities such as volunteering acts for the common welfare in *Time Enough for Love* (1973) and *Glory Road* (1963).

Heinlein was marked - in the 1950s - by racial segregation in the United States. He petitioned, with other writers, to demand the abolition of segregationist acts. *Farnham's Freehold* (1964) aims at reversing role plays between whites and blacks. Reader of this book, literally feel the pleasure Heinlein has in obliterating race stereotypes. He dragged sympathy towards black characters in *Tunnel in the Sky* (1955) and *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls* (1985). In a 1949 novel *Sixth Column*, he was accused of supporting a Truman-like doctrine culminating in a fictitious plan of extermination of all yellow people.

Suspicious of racism towards Asians were aggravated by the novels *Farmer in the Sky* (1950) and *Tunnel in the Sky* (1955). Both contain negative portrays of overpopulation in Asia. Many saw that bugs in *Starship Troopers* were to represent the Japanese and Chinese. Heinlein asserted that his books were to represent non-humans: *Jerry Was a Man* (1947), *The Star Beast* (1954), and *Red Planet* (1949) describe nonhumans who are marginalized because of their insufficiently-human appearance. This intra-human racism is unfairly advocated against all those who accuse him of racism. *Methuselah's Children* (1941) develops this idea; two alien races representing human beings: the Jockaira are the lower cast enslaved by hard labor, while the Martians and Venerians are the upper cast making the rules, and being constantly served and feared. Though belonging to the same species, there is an installed inner racism. The subtext unveils that racism be not a matter of physique, but one of power.

Heinlein shares with Orwell a deep apathy for Communism. Though, both of them were actively involved in socialist circles. Heinlein admitted his errors, and explained that history contains errors and inconsistencies that spell out contradictory views. Communism started to disturb him when it entered in contradiction with the cherished theme of self-making. Heinlein could not accept the state of assistance that

²⁰ A fictional era called the age of Interregnum.

negative Marxism can do: teaching laziness and helplessness is the negative turn of state-centered ideologies. In his books *Time Enough for Love* (1973), *The Number of the Beast* (1980), and *To Sail Beyond the Sunset* (1987), he initiates a meditation on the future of men if they engaged in communism and wealth redistribution.

The Dean of SF's cultural legacy touched upon several cultural issues. The richness and diversity of themes covered by Heinlein are astonishingly high in a genre to which superficial action of battles and space adventures is a standard. Sullivan (2006) believes that he has challenged the canons of SF writing. In that he exemplifies with characterization; "he created female and alien characters that were unusual for science fiction of that time²¹" (p. 68). Heinlein has tackled almost every political and social issue of great importance to contemporary readers, and the audiences avid of futuristic tales.

Within the thematic scopes of this dissertation (utopia & fascism), *Starship Troopers* (as a focus point) is a judicious choice that enlists large portions of the stated themes. The scandalous ideas that are unfolded will be put forward, so that a re-conception of utopia becomes possible. All in all, what Heinlein did was an absorption of the political and historical zeitgeist of the 20th Century.

I.2. Heinlein and the 20th century: a historical and intellectual framework

In an attempt to explain Heinlein's works, there is an upsurge need to understand the socio-historical context in which he has grown. The twentieth century will be remembered for the rise and fall of European totalitarianism: Communism, Fascism, and Nazism. Two world wars, the Cold War, McCarthyism, and the blossoming of Hippie counter-culture constituted the major landmarks for a historical account of Heinlein fiction. The world, in the times of the Dean of science fiction, was in a permanent instability. The United States' isolationism prevented the country from indulging in the fratricide conflicts among the European neighbors. However,

²¹ C. Sullivan III. *Robert A. Heinlein: Reinventing Series SF in the 1950s*. *Extrapolation*, Volume: 47, Issue:1, 2006, pp 66 -94.

disquieting echoes unsettled the North American populations and made them feel unsafe and vulnerable.

Heinlein contemplated the century with a watchful eye, a suspicious mind, and a measured optimism. What has marked the Twentieth Century was the rise of totalitarianism, in the first half, and the upsurge of the Cold War and the Hippie Movement in its second part. The cause (Totalitarianism and Communism) and effects (Cold War and Counterculture) have nourished the narratives of Heinlein. His vigilance towards the rise of Communism and the hesitant policies of the various American administrations to contain the Red Menace was embodied in fiction, but also in his political involvement. Some other works have reflected the tumultuous evolution of the political and cultural mutations of the USA. His narratives have anticipated the emergence of countercultural discourses and the enthronization of the 'Flower Power'. Obviously, Heinlein had survived McCarthyism as one prominent defender of containment. His novels *The Puppet Masters* and *Starship Troopers* testify of his commitment against Communist totalitarianism. Yet, they seemed to suggest the replacement of the Soviet oppression by Neo-conservatism. Therefore, this posture earned him the reputation of a reactionary writer: Heinlein angered the American Left, the Feminists, and the racial minorities for his reductionist view of the US culture and its miscegenation. Against all odds, Heinlein challenged his readership by taking an opposite stance with the Publication of *A Stranger in a Strange Land* and *the Moon is a Harsh Mistress*. Heinlein embraced the radical left ideas in promoting peace and love values and, moreover, in the contestation of oligarchic structures: authority, religion, and the media. This antagonistic view reversed the appraisal of his reputation. In *The Hippie Narrative: A Literary Perspective on the Counterculture*, Scott MacFarlane (2007) reminds of the role of L. Ron Hubbard²² and Robert A. Heinlein in shaping the intellectual grammar of counterculture. On *A Stranger in Strange Land* and its cultural impact, MacFarlane notes:

L. Ron Hubbard was another California-based Science Fiction writer who was well acquainted with Heinlein. In 1950 Hubbard wrote *Dianetics*, the seminal work for

²²*Dianetics* (1950) is the sourcebook of Scientology; the cult created by Hubbard.

Scientology, the religion founded by Hubbard. Heinlein was clearly fascinated by the propensity in American culture to allow for the incubation and creation of new religions or cults (...) Heinlein was certainly aware of Scientology as one of these emerging religions (...). The level of this author's autobiographical immersion within this text is not significant except to note the irony that the real-life Heinlein, similarly skeptical but ponderous, wanted minimal association with countercultural experimentations based on his "viewpoint" ideas in *Stranger* (p. 97).

MacFarlane clears Heinlein from any concomitances with Hubbard's theses, but associates them as a tandem of talented visionary SF writers who enhanced the emergence of counterculture. Sometimes in retreat, and other times anticipatory, Heinlein has constantly blurred his political and intellectual positions. The 1940s up to the 1970s were crucial decades in the life of the Dean of Science Fiction. He recorded and translated the transformations of his zeitgeist consonantly and dissonantly.

The following section is a brief account of the major historical and political phenomena of the 20th century. The starting is the rise of totalitarianism and Communism in Europe and their exportation as potential conflicts to the US. Then, the advent of McCarthyism and the prevalence of cultural conformism capitalized the frustrations and anxieties of Heinlein's compatriots. This fear grew exponentially and confiscated individual liberties in a more pernicious manner than the fantasized Communist threat. The size of oppression announced the proportion of the cultural reaction: the arrival and installation of counterculture. Ultimately, the Hippie culture reestablished libertarianism and authority defiance as cultural standards for the years to come.

1.2.1. Totalitarianism in Europe and the US posture

The first totalitarian act of the 20th Century was the Bolshevik Revolution in the Ex-Russian Empire (1917). Hordes of communists overthrew the Tsar and set an

obscurantist regime. In parallel, in the late 1920s, rose populist doctrines in Italy (Benito Mussolini and the Fascist Party) and Germany (Adolph Hitler and the National Socialist Party). Both ideologies sought to overthrow monarchies and fragile popular assemblies to establish a new political order predicated on disinformation, propaganda, stigmatization, and ostracism. President Woodrow Wilson (who has warned the allies against the harshness of the Versailles Treaty of 1918) has anticipated the drowning of Europe in a disnatured political order.

Hannah Arendt (1951) gives one of the most insightful autopsies of totalitarianism. In *The Origins of totalitarianism*, Arendt explains the confluence of the Bolsheviks, Nazis, and Fascists as imperialisms and pan-movements (p 249). The historian does believe that European ideologies of the Twenties and Thirties have imprisoned the individual within political and economic structures. Furthermore, singularities were erased and substituted for a higher collective property:

It is this absoluteness of movements which more than anything else separates them from party structures and their partiality, and serves to justify their claim to overrule all objections of individual conscience. The particular reality of the individual person appears against the background of a spurious reality of the general and universal, shrinks into a negligible quantity or is submerged in the stream of dynamic movement of the universal itself. In this stream the difference between ends and means evaporates together with the personality, and the result is the monstrous immorality of ideological politics. All that matters is embodied in the moving movement itself; every idea, every value has vanished into a welter of superstitious pseudoscientific immanence. (1951: 249).

Arendt explains the organized confusion between the collectivity and the individual as the backbone of totalitarianism. The movement becomes, then, a nebulous mass of means and ends; science and charlatanism, and above all a universal pattern that

governs the citizens' horizons. Arendt considers totalitarianism as utopia that lost its ideals and revolutionary momentum (p. 392). Historically, totalitarianism has mutated and endorsed diverse shapes and affected the most libertarian societies like the USA, for instance.

In *Essays in Understanding 1930-1954: Formation, Exile and Understanding* (1994), Arendt confesses her fear from the threat of conformism (pp. 423-427) and compares McCarthyism to totalitarianism. She deplores the passive-aggressive attitude of Europeans towards the absolutism reigning over the 1950s USA:

(...) it is curious to observe in Europe how little reported is the opposition to McCarthyism, which is voiced in entire freedom in the United States (...) What comes to light here is a characteristically European expectation of encountering a kind of conformism which needs no threats or violence, but arises spontaneously in a society that conditions each of its members so perfectly to its exigencies that no one knows that he is conditioned. The conditioning of the individual to the demands of society was early considered a characteristic trait of American democracy. Indeed, it became perhaps the chief reason America could develop into the nightmare of Europe, even of a freedom-loving Europe, something Americans find hard to understand. (1994: 424).

Arendt suggests that the US has created its own totalitarianism in the form of fight against Communism. Meanwhile, Europe was a silent partner (freed from fascism) tempted by Communism and Maoism. Arendt blames the European democracies for their tacit consent of the perpetrated monstrosities.

Similar observations are made by A. James Gregor (2009). In *Marxism, Fascism, and Totalitarianism: Chapters in the Intellectual History*, the scholar attempts a synthesis of totalitarian ideologies. In his view, totalitarianism was the name given by the Allies to the Axis during WWII. On the other hand, the term Fascist

was used by the Communists to encompass and identify the Japanese and European totalitarian doctrines:

Fascism” and “neofascism,” at one time or another, have been identified with conservatism, a defense of capitalism, anticommunism, right-wing extremism, genocidal intent, racism of one or another sort, thuggery of whatever sort, chauvinism, militarism, military rule, authoritarianism, xenophobia, homophobia, tax protests, terror bombings, religious fundamentalism, simple irrationalism, sexism, violence at soccer matches, religious bigotry, vandalism in graveyards, and hate speech. What they have not been identified with is communism—no matter how murderous and bestial some Marxist dictatorships have been... (2009:10).

Gregor highlights the utopian principles of the Italian Fascism in referring to Mussolini’s Journal, entitled *Utopia*. Mussolini explained the system of beliefs of the Fascist doctrine, as contrasted to Marxism. Furthermore, he justified a Darwinian exegesis to political and social concerns (p. 234). The essayist dissects the attraction-repulsion relationship between his party and the Soviets’ intellectual corpus.

Michael Geyer (2009) goes further and analyses the rivalry between the Communists and the Fascists in *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared*²³. He evokes the process of mutual image making (p. 36) which consists in a two-sided projection of the enemies’ visions of each other. Michael Geyer synthesizes the works of Katerina Clark and Karl Schlogel (2008)²⁴, and Richard Stites²⁵(1989):

²³ In Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick’s (Editors) *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared*, 2009.

²⁴ *Mutual Perceptions and Projections: Stalin’s Russia in Nazi Germany – Nazi Germany in the Soviet Union*. Ibid, pp 396- 441

²⁵ See : Richard Stites’ *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution*. Oxford University Press, 1989, pp 44–5.

(...)the Soviet image machine fared relatively well with its split imagination as the preserver of (German) culture in a barbaric war and as the relentless resistor against imperial aggression, whereas the German image machine proved so relentlessly and violently racist, points again to the utopian dimension of one ideology and the dystopian dimension of the other. But even on the Nazi side, multiple and conflicting images coexisted. Even if we want to think of this phenomenon as an Orientalism and an Occidentalism, we still have to deal with the simultaneous importance of the phenomenon, its slippery instability, and its extremely violent realization. Overall, it is surprising how little we actually know about how the two nations understood and imagined each other (2009: 36).

For Geyer, utopian intentions and dystopian consequences are unconditional prisms to comprehend the enthusiasm, effervescence and success of these totalitarian regimes. The East-West configuration confiscated the citizens of both blocks in a chauvinistic conception of utopianism. In the same book edited by Geyer and Fitzpatrick, Gorlizki and Mommsen ²⁶ (2009) affirm that Nazism and Stalinism were utopias in the beginning, and they were corrupted during the political execution (p. 60).

Most scholars agree with this ascertainment. Peter Baehr and Melvin Richter (*Dictatorship in History and Theory: Bonapartism, Caesarism, and Totalitarianism*, 2004) have studied the etymology and the emergence of populist movements. In their opinions, Cesar and Napoleon have been the initiators of Western dictatorial regimes. The utopian project has permanently fueled the aspirations of the rulers, but has inevitably turned dictatorial (p. 16). For Sheldon S. Wolin (*Democracy Incorporated: Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism*, 2008) superpower

²⁶ Yoram Gorlizki and Hans Mommsen. *The Political (Dis)Orders of Stalinism and National Socialism*. In Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick's (Editors) *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared*; 2009, pp 41- 86.

and its concentration are the bases of utopian idealism. Rulers have been convinced that they held the absolute truth, and that all their actions are directed towards the wellness of their subjects (pp 82-83). Benjamin L. Alpers (2003) supports this claim by quoting Carl Friedrich²⁷. In *Dictators, Democracy and American Public Culture: Envisioning the totalitarian Enemy 1920s- 1950s*, he underscores the dictators' fear of popular sovereignty as their greatest anguish. Alpers underpins this through the Americans' uptake of the European turmoil:

By the late 1930s, Americans had begun to see the European dictatorships in less personalistic terms: Nazism in Germany, Fascism in Italy, and Communism in Russia were presented less often as the creation of heroic, or horrific, individuals who molded society to their will and more often as the result of peculiar changes in mass psychology (2003: 30).

Dazed and astounded, the Americans were silent witnesses of the destruction of European nations. This spectator posture changed with the entrance of the US in the war, and their involvement in the fight against fascism. It is, then, that they overdeveloped their military arsenal and entered in another conflict: the fight against communism. In a chapter entitled *The Problem of the Military in a Democracy* (2003: 157-187), Alpers cites MacIver, Bonn, and Perry²⁸ who describe totalitarianism as social militarism (p 151), and who prefigured a militaristic turn in USA's political orientations.

The forced entrance of the US in WWII changed the course of the war. A weird alliance of the US with the USSR was sealed to defeat Hitler. The Roosevelt then the Truman Administrations were vigilant towards the Red Scare, but acted cooperatively as the circumstantial needs were so demanding. The USA's introduction of the nuclear bomb and the hydrogen bomb projected mass destruction as a Damocles sword on the

²⁷ See: Carl Joachim Friedrich, *Constitutional Government and Politics, Nature and Development*, 1937.

²⁸ Robert M. MacIver, Moritz J. Bonn and Ralph Barton Perry. *The Roots of Totalitarianism*. Addresses delivered at a meeting of the American academy of political and social science, November 18, 1939. American academy of political and social science, Philadelphia. James-Patten-Rowe pamphlet series, no. 9

heads of the Soviets, in particular and the world in general. The end of the war inaugurated another more perfidy decade embodied in the Cold War and McCarthyism.

I.2.2. McCarthyism

The 1950s and the 1960s were the decades of cultural and political upheavals in the USA. These were the years which impacted Heinlein's major fictions. Liberated from the Nazi and Fascist threats, the US witnessed its proper experience with growing totalitarianism. Certainties rubbed rumors on the Communists penetration in the American soil and their gradual infiltration in the state's highest institutions: Pentagon, Congress, and CIA.

The 1950s hosted a world conflict between two political and cultural dimensions. The Soviet's was a totalitarian world order based on the most extreme variant of Marxism. The American project was, on the other hand, a liberal-capitalist view predicated on the infinite extension of individual liberties. The arms race and military escalation of power exhibition led to permanent tensions and political threats. That was the beginning of the Cold War. The decade engendered an unprecedented of paranoia, suspicions, rumors, and vendettas. Senator Joseph McCarthy provoked a national élan against Communists and their supposed penetration in the American highest institutions: the Congress, Senate, Pentagon, and even the Oval. For Larry Ceplair²⁹ (2008), "[the] basic problem with the term 'McCarthyism' is that it lacks a consensual definition. It is not, and never was, an ideology. McCarthy himself only occasionally used the term and never defined it" (p. 406). Nevertheless, McCarthy's name gave birth to a political, societal, and cultural phenomenon: the 'Witch Hunt'. McCarthyism imprinted the two American administrations of Harry Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower, the FBI and the CIA, the media, and the American society in general. Robert Justin Goldstein (2006) reports that the introduction of the loyalty inquiries precipitated the birth of investigations and scrutiny:

It originated with President Truman's Executive Order 9835 of March 21, 1947, which required that all federal civil

²⁹ *McCarthyism revisited*. Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television Published online: 30 Jul 2008. 28:3, pp 405-414

service employees be screened for "loyalty." The order specified that one criterion to be used in determining that "reasonable grounds exist for belief that the person involved is disloyal" would be a finding of "membership in, affiliation with or sympathetic association" with any organization determined by the attorney general to be "totalitarian, Fascist, Communist or subversive" or advocating or approving the forceful denial of constitutional rights to other persons or seeking "to alter the form of Government of the United States by unconstitutional means"³⁰.

Firstly concerned with totalitarianism, Nazi criminals, and infiltrated fascists, the hunt focused exclusively on the Communists. President Eisenhower empowered the Loyalty Board with new prerogatives.

The US citizens discovered the blacklists, loyalty proofs, and blatant inquisition. In his pamphlet *Treason in Washington Exposed*³¹ (1950), McCarthy exposes his doctrine:

I felt that it was important (...) to show the complete incompetence of the loyalty board for the reason that in this case the files contained more than 25 documents showing membership in organizations listed as subversive or Communist front – that regardless of this, the loyalty board never went through the motion of asking the judge for an explanation as to why she joined these organizations, which the Secretary of State himself had stated were evidence that an employee was a bad security risk.(p.11)

³⁰ *Prelude to McCarthyism: The Making of a Blacklist*. Prologue Magazine. Fall 2006, Vol. 38, No. 3. <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2006/fall/agloso.html>

³¹ Senate hearings and auditions.

The country merged in a mass paranoia and everyone was suspecting his peers. Any odd behavior, speech, or public posture may lead to arrest, charge, and judgment. The Rosenberg's case signaled the confiscation of the basic presumptions of innocence. Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were arrested on the basis of informers' reports, in 1950. They were suspected of espionage for the USSR and - after a series of baroque trials - were executed three years later. Their lawyer John Rogge denounced vehemently the fascistic evolution of the judiciary system and the political institutions:

“I am more afraid of fascism than communism in America”;
 “fascism in America is masquerading under the name of nationalism”; “fascism is not dead in the United States, it is simply reconverting”; “reactionaries are preparing to take the remaining short step to fascism”; “the fascist threat to democracy is greater now than at any time since 1932³².”

The repressive policy of the American administration became an obsessive and systematic chase of the Leftists - not far from the one staged in 17th century New England against the witches.

McCarthy, who wanted to fight totalitarianism, found himself in a dissonant posture - where he was implementing fascistic ways to fight the Reds. Consequently, he lost his intellectual supporters, who started to dissociate themselves from his actions. That was the rise of a McCarthophobia. In Buckley Jr. and Bozell³³ (1954), William S. Schlam's prologue attempts a defense of the Senator. For Schlam, McCarthy's innermost fear was fascism with all its shades:

Indeed, nothing perhaps embitters McCarthy's opposition so much as the, to them, confusing fact that he has never indicated the slightest sympathy for Fascism. For, surely, one is allowed to presume a general consensus that these are the two irreducible tenets of any Fascist ideology: the

³² Quoted in Phillip Deery, *Red Apple: Communism and McCarthyism in Cold war New York*, 2014, p 137.

³³ See, WM. F. Buckley Jr. and L. Brent Bozell. *McCarthy and His Enemies: The Record and its Meaning*, 1954.

transfer of undivided social and political power into the hands of an executive which reigns supreme; and the abolition of all political parties, save a "people's" militarized rally around a deified leader and his appointed "elite". Different color schemes of Fascism (black, brown, or red) may, as it suits, drape this skeleton of the Fascist doctrine with different Sets of racial or social or philosophical (1954: xii-xiii).

*The Causes and Effects of McCarthyism*³⁴ of John Brown (1955) approves partially Schlamm, Buckley and Bozell statements. Brown, also, indicates McCarthy's sets of sincere intentions that neglected their primary objectives and went out of control. He relates the 'Witch Hunt' to an American mentality that envisions the world in a 'black and white' optics:

All the different types of McCarthyism, however, have one thing in common. They all take advantage of those principles of reasonableness and decency which make a living democracy possible. The question fundamentally is one of fair play, but also involved are the unique American conditions. Probably the most important is the black and white character of the American mentality and the obvious inability of most Americans to live peaceably with those of diametrically opposed opinions (p. 178).

The ascertainment that McCarthy was a magnifying mirror (to a society in perpetual search of an enemy) is validated in Thomas Doherty's *Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture* (2003). Doherty subtly redefines the notions of otherhood through colored concepts: "Red Fascism" (p. 8) and "Blacklisted People" (pp 19 -36). For him, McCarthyism was one semantic

³⁴ John Brown, *The Causes and Effects of McCarthyism*. The Political Quarterly. Volume 26, Issue 2. April 1955; pp 178-185.

redefinition of totalitarianism. Each step of the mutation was accompanied by a shift in the signifiers. The epoch forced the Americans to confront panic and solve their moral dilemmas³⁵. Some pro-McCarthyism tenants felt even the need to apologize nearly half a century after. Such is the case of Stephan Thernstrom³⁶. Who made a mea culpa speech in the National Association of Scholars³⁷ for his blind implications and corrupted judgments.

By the time McCarthyism declined, the 1950s ended with a massive hangover: Americans exhausted, intellectuals persecuted, and a nation divided. Though the situation was appeased by the repetitive brave decisions of the Supreme Court, which dismissed several federal cases, the pleas of a decade of suspicions, populism, gratuitous and expeditious trials have shattered the frail unity of a nation. The self-inflicted task of fighting totalitarian communism was extended to leftists, socialists, free thinkers, artists, and intellectuals. The viral propagation of the inquisition left a few people safe, and everyone affected. America buried McCarthyism with the arrival of Sixties that saw the rise of Civil Rights Activism and the Hippie movement.

1.2.3. The extinction of McCarthyism, the rise of the Hippies

The 1960s opened with the agglutination and stratification of various libertarian trends. David DeLeon's seminal work *Leaders from the 1960S: A Biographical Sourcebook of American Activism* (1994) affirms that the decade formalized the return of utopianism in various shapes, but most importantly under the form of political activism. In this edited book, DeLeon has collected biographies of the most influential political activists of the 1960s. The decade brought a set of candid idealism: desires to mend the ravages of the Witch Hunt and challenge the mainstream culture. A kaleidoscope of social and political claims spread all over the nation and involved: civil disobedience, liberalization of morals, anarchism and rebellion.

³⁵ See : Marjorie Heins, Rude Awakenings: *An American's Encounters with Nazism, Communism, and McCarthyism*. *American Communist History* 13(1), April 2014.

³⁶ An American Neoconservative scholar; author of the *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*. He was a supporter of McCarthyism, and he rejected affirmative action as well as other forms of positive racial discrimination.

³⁷ See: Stephan Thernstrom, *McCarthyism Then and Now*. *Academic Questions*, Volume 4, Issue 1, March 1991 pp 14–16

Staughton Lynd, for instance, is cited as the founder of Organized Socialist Left, a utopian community (p. 207) that aimed to create a judicial protection for workers and reorganize labor. Ecotopia, another instance, was born out of the ecological agitators' efforts to preserve the planet and restrain the monstrous industrial growth. Edward Abey (pp 291-296), Murray Bouchkin (pp 297- 305), and Jerry Rubin (pp 437 – 442) are described as the ancestors of Green Peace and WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature). Among the other noticeable utopian projects, the Civil Rights Movement emerged as a response to silenced aspirations of Afro-Americans, Hispanics, and women.

The striking efforts of political activists galvanized the American Left which was harassed during McCarthyism. Angela Davis, the legendary figure of human rights defense, emerged as a fearless communist militant pleading simultaneously for women equality, ethnic recognition, and middle class welfare. DeLeon describes Angela Davis, Noam Chomsky, and Paul Goodman, to name a few, as the elite of counterculture:

[These] individuals (...) all have some broad vision of community. Some advocate a society where individuals have direct control over their own lives through such institutions as unions, co-ops, and voluntary associations, rather than being "represented" by elected officials. Some call this ideal society anarchism, such as Noam Chomsky, Dorothy Day, and Paul Goodman. Others advocate forms of democratic or libertarian socialism, such as Heather Booth, Ron Dellums, Michael Harrington, Tom Hayden, Sidney Lens, I. F. Stone, Staughton Lynd, and James Weinstein. Some, like C.L.R. James and Herbert Marcuse, spoke for a non-party form of Marxism; some have been members of the Communist Party USA, such as Angela Davis and Dorothy Healey. Others have been idealistic liberals (like Jesse Jackson) ... (p. 470).

These names have entered in the American unconscious as they were new Founding Fathers of the 20th century America. The most significant contributions of these figures were the breaking of decades of conservatism and conformism. Michael Wm. Doyle³⁸ (2001) notes that, only, the Sixties leaders and utopians have had such an unlimited projection into the future, and that the decade benefited from an ideal conjuncture which permeated the emergence of a counterculture:

The counterculture did not come out of nowhere. Its birth was midwifed by simultaneous booms in both the U.S. economy and population. In the final analysis it must be understood as an expression of the utopian premises that form the wellsprings of American civilization. The commitment to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” with which the new nation rationalized its independence to the world was deliberately left vague and ambiguous so as to maximize its universal appeal (p. 152).

Doyle describes these utopian beliefs as a continuation of the American Dream, with a sense of overhauling the foundations of the myth and creating new cultural and societal standards. Doyle states that counterculture’s individuals levitated in a philosophical in-between; a modicum of figuration and abstraction, and a complete denial of earthen realities:

The counterculture’s quest for utopia was consonant, too, with the myth of American exceptionalism, a belief that posits the United States as both fundamentally different from and superior to other nations. It is characterized by totalism, by novelty, and by openness to experimentation. It betrays a certain insouciance toward the strictures of tradition, which periodically swells into mass rebellion against legal authority. It exhibits a pronounced tendency to

³⁸Michael Wm. Doyle, *Debating the Counterculture: Ecstasy and Anxiety Over the Hip Alternative*. In David Farber and Beth Bailey (editors), *The Columbia guide to America in the 1960s*, 2001 pp 143- 156.

moralizing coupled paradoxically with the headlong pursuit of pleasure. Utopian projects all too often beget dystopian realities, as the record of the twentieth century attests. But those who deem themselves unfettered by history are not conditioned to see past as prologue. Counterculture is inscribed in the American cultural pattern (p. 153).

Therein was the confluence of the pacifists, anti-war protestors, LGBT movement, Second Wave Feminists, the Beat Generation writers, and the New Left. Crystallized around the Afro-American claims for equality, these subcultures shaped the Civil Rights Movement; a blend of utopianism and revolt against the established order, tainted by naivety and condor.

It was in San Francisco, in Berkley, that anti war protests formalized the existence of the Hippie movement. Under the banner of ‘peace and love’, The Hippie movement started first as an underground culture, then as subculture, and then joined counterculture. Nurtured by the dejected and desponded minorities, the Hippies created a constellation of the leftovers who decided to make their own world. The New Abolitionists and Black Power joined the flow and tainted the movement with racial equality claims. The then-American administration seemed unprepared for the groundbreaking wave of libertarianism. Sharon Monteith ³⁹ (2008) reports that the amplification of identity activists and youth circles has destabilized the Richard Nixon administration:

The anti-war movement evolved out of other social movements and was one of the most heterogeneous. The image of peace protestors as beatniks-turned-hippies protesting via love-ins was designed to damage the movement. The government’s distrust of youth movements was made manifest by 1969 when Vice-President Agnew⁴⁰ declared that young anti-war protestors were like naughty

³⁹Sharon Monteith, *American Culture in the 1960s*.

⁴⁰Vice President under Richard Nixon. He was publically disgraced and forced to resign in 1966.

children, too easily influenced by communists (pp 175-176).

The movement was seeded and the first riots were fatal to a dozen of protestors. The virality of wrath soon prevailed all over California. Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron⁴¹ (2001) report a historical fact: the cultural secession that took place with the Berkley insurrection and the profound despise with which the movement was met marked the birth of counterculture:

On May 15, 1969, Governor Ronald Reagan ordered armed police to carry out a dawn raid against hippie protesters who had occupied People's Park near the Berkeley campus of the University of California (...) On that day, the "straight" world and the counterculture appeared to be implacably opposed. On one side of the barricades, Governor Reagan and his followers advocated unfettered private enterprise and supported the invasion of Vietnam. On the other side, the hippies championed a social revolution at home and opposed imperial expansion abroad. In the year of the raid on People's Park, it seemed that the historical choice between these two opposing visions of America's future could only be settled through violent conflict p 365.

The panic of the rulers⁴² reflected a profound misunderstanding of the mutation of the American society and the ravages of McCarthyism in the previous decade. The Hippies established a parallel culture that was first underestimated, but afterwards validated by popular acclaim.

⁴¹ Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron. *Californian Ideology*. In Peter Ludlow (editor). *Crypto Anarchy, Cyberstates, and Pirate Utopias*, 2001. pp 363 – 387.

⁴² See : Rodney P. Carlisle and J. Geoffrey Golson (Editors), *Turning points, Actual and Alternate Histories : America in Revolt during the 1960s and 1970s*, 2008.

The Hippie times were also historical landmarks of the women's re-appropriation of the intellectual debate: their position in society and their access to the same privileges of white men. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) is said to have spurred the Second Wave of Feminism⁴³. The legendary feminist questioned whether the post- World War II suburban utopia was really enough to satisfy educated women. She speaks of women's identity crisis and housewifery as a catalyst to their condition. In the prominent chapter the *Forfeited Self* (pp 299 – 325), Friedan explains the how women melt in the molds created by men, and how American culture (and more precisely the American School of Psychology; notably Abraham Maslow) has confined women to sexual objects that cannot transcend their status and achieve self-actualization. The female segments of the Hippie movement endorsed the view of Betty Friedan and staged a parallel sexual revolution⁴⁴.

The Hippie communities marketed sexual desires and the use of recreational drugs as rites of passage from conformism to self-liberation. The wall of silence that was erected in the previous decades is gone. In *Hippies, a Guide to an American Subculture*, Micah L. Issitt (2009) accounts for the Hippies' search for self-realization and enlightenment through the use of drugs. Their search of 'artificial paradises' is motivated by the need of evasion from the realities of the (dystopian) concrete world and the fabrication of a levitating universe:

Hippie society is ideally conceived of as a place where personal interest is served; where the individual is free to "do his own thing" and to "find where he's at." In its utopian version, it is a world where each, in accordance with personal disposition, acts in terms of his individual interests; and all, in sharing similar interests, act in concert. Thus how any individual chooses to orient himself toward

⁴³ Second Wave Feminism is distinguished from the First Wave which was mainly predicated on Franchise. The 1960s Feminism targeted such personal freedoms as the right to dress and behave in society beyond the male-imposed canons.

⁴⁴ See: Dalila Zeghar's work on the double curse on the black female condition in *New categories of female character in Alice Walker's novels through a comparative study of western, African-American and feminist theoretical propositions*. Phd Thesis Supervised by Prof. Bahous Abbas, University of Algiers 2, 2012, pp 28-29.

the means of production and distribution ultimately rests on matters of personal disposition. Some hippies live as idlers, as persons who drift aimlessly, without ambition. Others homestead and focus their attention on “getting by.” Yet others desire to secure various advantages for themselves and their kin—and in so desiring they may direct their attention and interest towards the marketplace (p. 117).

The Hippies, as illustrated above, loathed market economy and adopted collectivism as the basic mode of the production and redistribution of wealth.

The ethnographic study of Sherri Cavan⁴⁵ (1972) reveals the synergy that the Hippies have succeeded to operate. They maintained a balance between personal objectives of self-fulfillment and their community’s collective needs:

Hippie society is ideally conceived of as a place where personal interest is served; where the individual is free to “do his own thing” and to “find where he’s at.” In its utopian version, it is a world where each, in accordance with personal disposition, acts in terms of his individual interests; and all, in sharing similar interests, act in concert. Thus how any individual chooses to orient himself toward the means of production and distribution ultimately rests on matters of personal disposition (p.235).

Free will and personal concerns always prevailed. Nevertheless, their solidarity in the Civil Rights marches and the refusal of the Vietnam War cemented their ranks and sealed their unity⁴⁶. Obviously, the Hippies are neither heterogeneous nor monolithic.

⁴⁵ Sherri Cavan. *The Class Structure of Hippie Society*. Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, Vol. 1, Issue 3, 1972.

⁴⁶ Historians incorporate the Woodstock Festival, 1969 and the Stonewall Revolt, 1969 (LGBT insurrection) to the Hippies’ unionist actions.

They are made of singularities and differences that have met in a specific momentum. John Robert Howard⁴⁷ (1969) distinguishes four types of Hippies:

... the visionaries, the freaks and heads, the midnight hippies, and the plastic hippies. The visionaries are utopians who pose an alternative to existing society. They repudiate conventional values on the grounds that they induce status anxiety and a fetish for material acquisition (p. 43).

The visionaries are, indeed, the component that carried the counterculture to a challenging culture. In comparison, the fragments of McCarthyism have vanished (with residual traces), while Hippies set a cultural background that is constantly reviving through the historical legacy of the emancipation of minorities; “*L’individu roi*”⁴⁸ (individualistic king figure), for instance, has been set as a life standard for the decades to come.

The visionary Hippies had that particularity which consists in the belief that they were unique in their crafting of utopia. Timothy Miller (1999) outlines this fallacious belief by asserting that there is a long and various utopian traditions. In *The 60s Communes, Hippies and Beyond*, Miller quotes the observations of Robert Houriet⁴⁹

"At the outset, [the 1960s communal movement] was the gut reaction of a generation. Hippie groups living a few country miles apart were unaware of each other's existence and equally unaware of the other utopian experiments in American history. They thought theirs were unique and unprecedented."1 However, although a sense of newness and of discontinuity with the past did indeed characterize

⁴⁷ John Robert Howard, *The Flowering of the Hippie Movement*. Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 382. Protest in the Sixties (Mar., 1969), pp. 43-55.

⁴⁸ French Expression - emanating from the French Theory (Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, and Michel Foucault) as concept through which all philosophical conceptions are individual-centered.

⁴⁹ Robert Houriet. *Getting Back Together*, 1971.

the 1960s outlook (particularly among the counterculture), the people of the new generation emerged from a historical context as surely as any other generation ever did; the communes, like the rest of the cultural milieu, had sources in history as well as in contemporary culture (p. 01).

The United States has always had a utopian destiny; its settlements, the Quakers, The Shakers, Oneida, the Farm, to name some ⁵⁰. The utopian projects have had (in common) a re-appropriation of urban or rural spaces. After the 1967 ‘Summer of Love⁵¹’ thousands of Hippies moved from urban locations to rural locations, under the banner of ‘back-to-land’ movement⁵², for the sake of establishing communal utopias. These secular utopias were predicated on the architectural and ecological principles of estheticism and harmony (in their spatial senses), and inspired from the socialist theories of Charles Fourier. Their aim was to defy the mainstream culture and create other lifestyles which are not commanded by the market, the army, or the bourgeois.

The Hippie movement ran out of steam by the mid 1970s for various reasons. The main one concerned the abrogation of the mandatory conscription⁵³. The antiwar activists’ efforts, combined with the Civil Rights marches, ended the War in Vietnam in 1975. Another element that defiled the movement was the moral panics induced by the abusive use of drugs and acids. Historical observers estimate that excessive drugs’ use and depraved sexual practices have precipitated the decline of the movement and the disaffection of the militants.

The popularity of the Hippies was even more damaged by Charles Manson⁵⁴ and the Manson Family murders. The Manson Family was a product of the Hippie culture in its most nihilistic form. Jeet Heer (2017) of the *New Republic* Affirms that

⁵⁰ See: Robert P. Sutton. *Communal Utopias and the American Experience: Religious Communities, 1732–2000*, 2003.

⁵¹ One of the greatest Hippie (mediatized) meetings in the Golden Gate (San Francisco) – organized to celebrate peace and love.

⁵² See: Gina Misiroglu (editor). *American Countercultures: An Encyclopedia of Nonconformists, Alternative Lifestyles, and Radical Ideas in U.S. History*, 2013, p 18.

⁵³ The Draft Lottery (1969) was a conscription random selection process, voted under Nixon, to enhance the size of the US troops in Vietnam. The Draft was repealed in 1973.

⁵⁴ Charles Manson (1934-2017) was a mass murderer and the leader of a California-based utopian community: the Manson Family. With his followers he was associated to nine assassinations - including Sharon Tate the spouse of the film maker Roman Polanski.

Manson was not literate but had stunning absorption ability and that he was influenced by L. Ron Hubbard and Robert A. Heinlein:

Manson won them [The Manson Family] with a doctrine of communal bonding: They would be a family and share in all things, including love. Manson's made-up religion was a cut-and-paste invention that borrowed from many sources. As The New York Times notes, Manson's philosophy was "an idiosyncratic mix of Scientology, hippie anti-authoritarianism, Beatles lyrics, the Book of Revelation, and the writings of Hitler." But the sci-fi component was pronounced. *Stranger in a Strange Land* provided the Manson family with its rituals (water-sharing ceremonies), terminology ("grokking"), and promise of transcendence (Manson's followers hoped that, like the hero of Heinlein's novel, they would gain mystical powers).⁵⁵

The association of the Hippies ideals and the utopian communes with the folly of Manson and his disciples accelerated the fall of the movement. The activists, themselves, felt the weight of the years and the systematic obsolescence of naivety and idealism⁵⁶. All in all, what will be remembered is the fact that the Hippies have succeeded in endangering the hegemony and they have modified the canons of authority and citizenship.

I.3. Heinlein in motion: the utopian uncertainty

The condensed slices of historical markers (fascism, anti-communism, and counterculture) are present in Heinlein's narratives. The Dean of SF liked to name his

⁵⁵ Source: Jeet Heer, *Charles Manson's Science Fiction Roots: How L. Ron Hubbard and Robert Heinlein influenced a murderous cult*. The New Republic. November 21, 2017. <https://newrepublic.com/article/145906/charles-mansons-science-fiction-roots>

⁵⁶ See: Richard Brownell. *Chapter 05: The Counterculture Loses Its Way*. In *Counterculture of the 1960s (World History)*, 2011, pp 70-83.

art 'speculative fiction', as he used sustainable historical facts and extrapolated them to probable future happenings. In his trilogy of liberty and self responsibility (*Starship Troopers*, *A Stranger in a Strange Land*, and *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*), the writer did capture the socio-historical contextual emanations and has incorporated them in his narrative, without eschewing any possible controversy: fascism allegations, misogyny, or racism.

Much of the author's narratives are utopian-oriented propositions in which the moral concerns are on the borderline between absolutism and relativism. Heinlein seemed to have never forgotten that all historical instances of utopian projects have been transformed into totalitarian realities. Eric D. Weitz's conclusion in *A Century of Genocide: Utopias of Race and Nation* (2003) explains this fact:

The movements and regimes (...) [Communism, Nazism, Racial Communism (Khmer Rouge, Cambodia) and National Communism (Serbia)] all articulated powerful visions of the future. Each of them promised to create utopia in the here and now. There were, of course, profound differences in the contours of the future societies they intended to create (p. 236).

Heinlein's political unconscious prevailed all over his prominent narratives. Indeed, he was receptive to the perversity of the totalitarian European political regimes. They all have started with a dream, and ideal, and utopianism. In their execution, the totalitarian doctrines have crushed individual liberties and suspended all possible freedom of consciousness. Heinlein was not the conscientious objector⁵⁷ of his time; he was in favor of the most fundamental conservative principles like patriotism and excessive chauvinism. *Starship Troopers* is the example of the belligerent fiber of the author: the paramount proposal of an all-militaristic order through which the society is regimented, and citizenship earned⁵⁸. His observations of his own country are similarly

⁵⁷ A term that refers to persons who holds a negative standpoint towards the military service. See: Anders Schinkel. *Conscience and Conscientious Objections*. 2007, pp 483- 56.

⁵⁸ See: Nader Elhefnawy. *Robert Heinlein's Starship Troopers*. *The Explicator*, 68:1,2010 pp 62-63.

circumspect as he questioned the attitude to have in front of communism. In *The Puppet Masters*, he contested the hesitation between resistance and collaboration and opted for retaliation and undertaken fight.

As a writer, he set personal dialectics of his historical concerns. Firstly identified as an anti-Communist, he attacked the leniency of the then-rulers and their underestimation of the menace. Thus, *Starship Troopers* was his response to the cessation of the nuclear tests. Then, when the ‘Witch Hunt’ climaxed, he reversed his political discourse into a celebration of demilitarization and othered-oriented love and understanding. The ideological gap in Aliens’ representation in *Starship Troopers* and *A Stranger in a Strange Land* is sufficiently considerable to start to wonder if that is the same writer who holds these discourses. Pure and simple, Heinlein carried provocation to the extreme. He reiterated the libertarian claims in *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, minus pacifism. The novel embraced the growing anarchism of the Hippie movement and Neo-Trotskyism which are typical obsessions of 1950s writers. M. Keith Booker’s *The Post-Utopian Imagination: American Culture in the Long 1950s* (2002) unveils the concerns of the decade. The scholar assumes that postwar novelists have attempted to recreate a utopianism inspired from the foundation roots of America. He refers to Norman Mailer and Vladimir Nabokov as utopian provocateurs (p 48). Heinlein is, also, pictured as a syndrome of the American intellectuals’ quest for challenging the established order – by introducing zests of agitation.

Alternatively in and out of trendiness, Heinlein’s fiction cannot be amputated from the American tradition of utopianism. Matthew Wilhelm Kapel (*Exploring the Next Frontier Vietnam, NASA, Star Trek and Utopia in 1960s and 1970s American Myth and History*, 2016) explains that Heinlein’ *Starship Troopers* updates two foundation myths of the USA: survival in the Far West and the notion of frontiers:

The battle suit of *Starship Troopers* is precisely this kind of technology, and it offers in Heinlein’s work what Mogen claims of much of American science fiction, generally nicely captures the author’s use of such frontier mythology and ideology. In Heinlein’s work, Mogen notes, “Though

technology changes, conditions that forge the frontier character endure.” As a result Heinlein often “explicitly draws parallels between qualities required to survive the Old West and those required in the new frontiers of space” (1993, 47–48). (2016: 87).

In quoting Mogen ⁵⁹ (1993), Kapel recalls Heinlein’s devotion to perpetuate the American myth of frontiers transcendence the and new spaces conquest. Like-minded ascertainties are found in Monroe Doctrine ⁶⁰ (Manifest Destiny) and Truman Doctrine ⁶¹ (Domino Theory): the notions of territorial expansions, the choice to intrude or not in others’ countries domestic affairs, and above all the notion of the limits of sovereignty.

Heinlein (like Hubbard) believed more in political determinism than in scientific fate. His utopias use minimal scientific configurations (cognitive estrangement) to antagonize the political certainties⁶². The author of the Golden Age of SF was less apocalyptic in his view of the future (except the communist threat) while his SF pen-peers were more apocalyptic in their visions of utopia⁶³. Heinlein held bittersweet conceptions about the future; a nuanced apprehension of utopianism made of antiestablishment and utter submission to authority. These contradictions will be studied in the next chapters as intrinsic logic in his writings and as extrinsic effects of his narratives on his readership.

Conclusion

Heinlein’s socio-historical context reveals a quest for a sort utopianism mirrored by the turmoil of the 20th century. The rise of totalitarianism and its clash with the Western democracies enabled Communism to emerge as new potential world order. The dread of the USA, in its impotency to curb the advance of the Reds, signified the probable penetration of the Soviets inside the territories. Then, followed a

⁵⁹ See : David Mogen, *Wilderness Visions: The Western Theme in Science Fiction Literature*, 1993.

⁶⁰ The end of interference in foreign countries’ affairs.

⁶¹ The end of isolationism for the sake of containing Communism.

⁶² See: Majid Yar. *The Cultural Imaginary of the Internet. Virtual Utopias and Dystopias*, 2014, p 19.

⁶³ See: Vita Fortunati. *The Metamorphosis of the Apocalyptic Myth: From Utopia to Science Fiction*. In Krishan Kumar and Stephen Bann (editors). *Utopias and the Millennium*, 1993, pp 81-89

second 'Witch Hunt' whose targets were the leftists, the colored, the females, and all what constituted a departure from the established values. The paranoid and hysterical directions - that McCarthyism took - were gradually leading the nation to an irreversible social and cultural secession. The institutionalized fight against the Reds suffocated the civil society which started to contest the unbearable political pressure. The opposition took the form of the Civil Rights Movement and the Hippie Movement. The civil society reconnected with libertarian claims of universal and individual rights. Thus, counterculture was born with one major aim: recovering the lost liberties and conquering new ones.

Utopian and anarchist, the Hippies have destabilized the establishment and redefined the American society - rocked by the benevolent discourse of a pillow book entitled *A Stranger in Strange Land*. The author of the bellicose pamphlet *Starship Troopers* turned his back with an insightful treaty of peace and love *A Stranger in a Strange Land*. Vehemently critical to religion, media, and society in general, the novel cautioned the claims of the Hippie generation and their descendants. The utopianism of Heinlein moved brutally from unashamed neoconservative-fascistic discourse to a blatant countercultural Hippie and anarchist manifestos. Heinlein's sense of utopia has changed in parallel with the transformation of the political and cultural zeitgeist. Copying and transcending fashions (sometimes anticipating them), he embodied the metamorphosis of the concept and its versatility.

CHAPTER II

Cognitive dissonance, Reception and Responses: The Thesis's Theoretical Propositions and Methodological Scaffolding

Introduction

This chapter exposes the theoretical and methodological contours of the dissertation. The work is set within the confluence of literature, history, and psychology – for the sake of identifying and understanding of the writer’s cultural and cognitive dissonances. Beyond Heinlein and his contradictions, the SF genre itself remained marginal and dissonant until it that has gradually earned respect: It has mutated from a sensational consumption product to an alternative proposition of storytelling. Inherent to this genre is its estrangement; the thematic abundance of the genre exposes the readers to a gamut of intrinsic and extrinsic cognitive fallacies: paranoia, persecution delirium, fantasies and cognitive dissonance. Thus, the atypical prose of Heinlein is propitious to a considerable number of dissonances, interpretations and diagnoses.

Reading Heinlein, or any other SF work, involves several reading strata: the author’s texts and the creation process, the critical reception and the readers’ feedback. As estranging narratives, the works of Heinlein appeal to a new ontology: not fatally what he intends, but the extent of his cognitive conflicts and their transmissibility to his readers – in the form of incidental mixed signals, as an example. For the sake of detecting cognitive dissonance and its ramifications, I opted for a multi-disciplinary analytical approach: fragmentary elements of new historicism and critical discourse analysis for the parts dealing with the writer and his cultural anchorage. The second set of approaches is concerned with reception and readers’ response theory. This progressive approach will comprise - through telescoped theories and methods – a logical articulation: a departure from context-based to context-free approaches; from close reading to distant reading. On the theoretical level, Darko Suvin’s Cognitive Estrangement and Leon Festinger’s Cognitive Dissonance Theory shape the main elements of the conceptual framework of the study. Psychonarratology will constitute a transitory passage to readers-based approaches: reception and readers’ response theory.

The last segment of the methodological scaffolding incorporates sentiment analysis within the readership communities in the operational study of cognitive dissonance. This last effort gets closer to what is commonly named distant reading: the

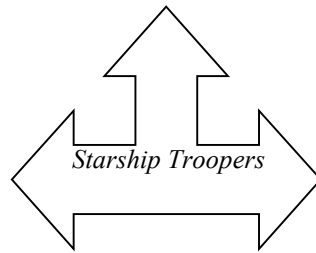
current tendencies incarnated by the Stanford Literary Lab¹, Gayatri Spivak (*Death of a Discipline*, 2003) and Franco Moretti (*Distant Reading*, 2013). Since the 2000s, literary scholars introduced their responses to the saturation of close textual reading with an original conception of texts as a collection of data. This movement advocates the use of data-mining, sentiment analysis and computer-aided semantic partitioning in order to extend the scope of literary insights. More than a trendy method, distant reading embodies the future of language-based disciplines in terms of understanding, interpretation, and in-depth re-conception of the literary doxa.

Socio-historical and cultural dissonances are not discarded. In fact, the weight of the historical paradigm is determinant in the understanding of the semantic evolution of the text (*Starship Troopers*) and its resonance over various readership communities. Heinlein has had several generations of readers scattered over different periods of modern history. Each group of readers is envisaged an interpretive community which creates its own critical lenses with reference to their zeitgeist. For instance, the fact that the novel was adapted into film enabled the writer to attract a new generation of readers and literary critics who constructed a new criticism - the latter being different from the 1960s and 1970s criticism.

This chapter also provides a review of scholarly works on psychonarratology and readers' responses description. The works of Purves and Beach, Odell and Cooper, Cooper and Michalak have served for the sketching of an operational ground of the study of cognitive dissonance: appraisals, beliefs, judgments, decision and regret. These scholars changed the abstractedness of recipients' feedback into a materialized set of analyzable data; they departed from the notions of implied reader to reach the actual reader. Their works validated a considerable part of my interrogations. Consequently, the theoretical and methodological propositions will be interwoven subtly and coherently to cover the scope of the dissertation.

¹ See the exposition of the structure's research statements, <https://litlab.stanford.edu>.

Cognitive conceptual framework:
Cognitive estrangement and cognitive dissonance.



Psychonarratology:

Reception, reader-author contract,
and opinion mining readers' responses.

Sentiment analysis

II.1. Darko Suvin and Cognitive Estrangement: in-text dissonance

SF does possess -within itself- the germs of contradiction, contrast, and inconstancy. After its instatement as a 'respectable' form of fiction, the academia attempted to examine its essence. Among them Darko Suvin (1930-) stands as one of the most influential SF scholars. Early, he theorized much of the characteristics of that atypical genre. First, he appealed for undivided attention to its narrative structures. Then, he inspected the estrangement caused to the readers. Indeed, SF's unique position as a logic-free type of fiction enables it to introduce imaginary worlds, fantasized futures, and uncomfortable ideas. *In Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre*, Suvin (1979) theorized the *Novum*² as the most evident form of cognitive estrangement, the *Novum* being all what is not validated by cognition. Thus when an SF writer constructs narrative worlds, he/she gradually forces his readers to adopt his logic, or the logic of the world he is presenting. Evidently, the torrent of inconsistent narremes³ introduced by SF writers is susceptible to make readers doubt into their own conceptions of logic and reason: "The supposed novelty [of SF] rejects cognitive logic and claims for itself a higher occult logic" (1979:68). The canons of SF narratives demand the introduction of a device that is new enough to astonish readers and jolt their system of values.

² Latin word for new thing. In Suvin's theory it is the scientific or technical device (introduced in the narrative) that is unusual, or unknown to readers.

³ The smallest and most meaningful narrative detail.

Cognitive estrangement is not limited to the incorporation of scientific techniques in the storytelling. It consists in injecting a set of subversive ideas within banal stories. In his seminal work *Science Fiction, anatomy of Utopia / Dystopia*, Suvin (1972) stresses the “anti-cognitive laws’ (p. 375) as absolute prerequisites to the creation of a valid SF narrative. Much of the craft of writing is predicated on the verisimilitude of narremes with actual elements of the physical world. Suvin affirms that SF not only questions “the man or the world but which man? In which kind of world?”(p. 375). A preliminary example could be found in the political and philosophical directions of Heinlein’s trilogy. In fact, Heinlein crystallized a bunch of postwar fears and dreads into a narrative proposition. These statements included *Novums* (like warfare machinery) but also a series of ‘unusual’ ideas: proto-fascism, anarchism, libertarianism ...etc. Suvin concludes that “post war SF [is] a combination of scientific cognition and social oppression (global catastrophes, cybernetics, dictatorships...)” (1972: 378-379). All the anti-cognitive propositions are thereby narrative reactions to the drifts of the contemporary Western societies. This conclusion ends enthroning the belief that all postwar dreams (utopias) have been over-fantasized, and the state of delusion had been temporary. Therefore, the dominant canon SF was to be exclusively pessimistic in tone.

Suvin (1979) classifies SF narratives into three major categories; all have in common the prevailing pessimism of their tone: banal, incoherent, and invalidated pessimisms. Banal pessimism is sparse and circumscribed and SF-*Novums*-free (more oriented toward romance and adventure). Incoherent pessimism is articulated around disparate narremes and does not focus on a specific storyline. Invalidate pessimism is dependent on the writer’s intent and the logic he/she wants to strew. Cognitive estrangement is clearly bound to the invalidated pessimism type. Suvin questions the plausibility of the cognitive construct of a given world on the basis of his author’s belief. Narration, then, can only be a tool of readers’ manipulation; a re-contextualization of reality. “How is their implied readers supposed to respond and deal with a narrative reality that is an inverted, reverted, converted, everted, averted, subverted other to his certainties of self and novum” (1979:78).

The perspective of these mind games implies a reconsideration of the historical landmarks of the readers. Paradigms of judgments are blurred (like in the empirical environment) and anxiety is stimulated to agitate the fears of gloomy historical horizons. Suvin claims that the dreads of past totalitarian abjections is not specific to SF, and that more ‘mainstream’ American literature has constantly recalled that: “[Mark] Twain returned frequently in his fragmentary sketches to the image of a future dictatorship – monarchist technological or theological – in the United States, establishing in this way a central theme for SF” (1979 : 200-201). Though systematically associated with future (and futurology) SF is profoundly backward-looking. While the *Novum* estranges readers with exotic and hard-to-believe artifacts, the narremms titillate the familiar historical-unconscious of the readers. This is what Heinlein calls ‘Future History’. In *Positions and Presuppositions in Science Fiction*, Suvin (1988) revived his thesis on the bulk of the past in SF futuristic narratives:

This phase constitutes a “future history system formally similar to the model of a number of American SF writers (for example Heinlein and Asimov). It is a not quite systematic series of novels and stories with interlocking characters and locations progressing from the end of the twenty-second century, realistically converging life on a predominantly communist (classless) Earth and human relations.(1988: 154)

The grammar of political SF is designed according to historical data rather than forecast. Nevertheless, the futuristic varnish is obtained through probabilities’ calculation and gross extrapolation. Suvin does not refute the New Historicist approach to the understanding of the scopes of SF narratives. Stephen Greenblatt’s⁴ legacy anchored historical data as unsurpassable in the explication of writers’ ulterior motive. As a matter of fact, the major trends in SF narratives are congested by

⁴The Harvard scholar is one of the founders of New Historicism. His theory states that texts are the product of the circulation of socio-cultural energy.

historical mementos. Heinlein, himself, used to name his fiction anticipation or 'Future History'. This oxymoron pertains to the core of the genre used to cumulate contradictions and ambiguities. Suvin (1972) further highlights the vocation of the genre: "The valid SF forms or subgenre of anticipation tales located in the historical future of the author's society – should be strictly differentiated from the technocratic ideology of extrapolations" (p. 78).

While people tend to confuse SF with futurology, the fact is that Novums are, sometimes, purely ornamental. They act as indices on the author's background and offer a preview of the ideas surrounding the creation of a text. Then comes the processes of hyperbolization and extrapolation; current tendencies are simply amplified and theorized into a probable future: However the cognitive value of all SF including anticipation tales is to be found in its analogical reference to the author's present, rather than in predictions, discrete or global (Op cit. 78).

The historical context - injected in the pseudo-futuristic perspective - is not the only estranging paradigm in SF narratives. The historical poetics (by opposition to hermeneutics) of the genre relies solely on what contemporary readers make of it. SF can be easily outdated if the Novums are substantiated by scientific and technical progress. Hence, outworn narrative devices fall short and may provoke disbelief and incredibility. Suvin maintains that the genre has historically preserved its coherence through a conscientious balance between unmovable historical data and believable Novums: "This definition seems to possess the unique advantage of rendering justice to a literary tradition which is coherent through the ages and within itself (...) it thus permits us to lay the basis of a coherent poetics of SF " (1972: 347).

SF seems not be intrinsically dissonant nor inconsistent, but it is likely to provoke dissonance and inconsistencies. Suvin (1972) implies that it is a semantic game without clear references (p. 374). Nevertheless, SF main's thematic groundwork is decidedly utopian designs. Utopian ideas have been a constant matrix in storytelling: from Plato to Philip K. Dick, passing by Jules Verne and George Orwell, all have made their utopian proposition. Suvin believes that utopian SF is "sociological fiction or social science fiction" (1988: 381), and that it operates "by an explicit or implicit comparison of its imaginary community with the author's environment" (1972: 33). In

Science Fiction, anatomy of Utopia / Dystopia, Suvin (1972) had already reached the conclusion that “in the 20th century, SF has moved into the sphere of anthropological and cosmological thought becoming a diagnosis, a warning, and -most-importantly – a mapping of possible alternatives” (p. 378). The key concept in this statement would be warning. Factually, the resonance of historical mistakes (namely Fascism and Nazism) sums the anguish of utopian SF narrative. Suvin, indeed, speaks about a historical and a narrative determinism that the genre is not programmed to overcome, nor overwhelm. He illustrates his view by referring to “the horrors of Cold War politics paranoid militarism, mass hysteria organized by politicians and encroaching government totalitarianism [that] are broached in the stories of the mid-1950s” (1988: 119).

Robert A. Heinlein and Isaac Asimov belonged to that era of doubt and fear. Though critics hailed Asimov and somewhat excommunicated Heinlein, rare are those who deny him the craft of transcribing the fears and aspirations of his time. If one wants to make sense of the alien invasion archetype, it is evident that it signifies the Red scare. The social cognition of the then-readers would link aliens with the Soviets and their expansionist project. Other ‘estranged’ readers are likely to see their (McCarthyism) condition in the eternal question: who are the monsters? Suvin (1972) provides his own interpretation : “The aliens – utopian monsters or simply differing strangers – are a mirror to man (...) the mirror is not only a reflecting one, it is also a transforming one ...”(p. 374). The Bugs in *Starship Troopers* can either be the Soviets, the McCarthyists, or the infiltrated American communists. The monstrosity of casual human beings (readers for instance) is supposed to be modified if they match their cognition with the reflected narrative portrait.

According to Suvin (1972), SF’s complex narrative mechanisms demand readers to have a higher cognition, and engage themselves in the author’s world even if it be estranging. Upstream, they contract settings, beliefs, and ideas that are beyond established rules. There is a comfort zone that readers have to escape to be able to connect with the Novums and grasp his intent. This SF-reader / SF-writer contract is actually more exigent than ordinary fiction: “ To the demand of SF, a level of cognition higher than that of the average reader (...) as a minimum, we must demand

from SF that it be wiser from the world it speaks to” (p. 381). As SF is predicated on estrangement and phantasms, SF readers’ contract with writers cannot be fulfilled unless they subsume themselves to authorship ‘weird’ cognitions.

This bargaining process involves authorship, readership, social cognition, and historical data. During the reading experience, authors hypothec their audiences’ cognitions and drag them into their fictional territories. Disarmed in front of estranging dimensions (spatial, temporal, and moral), readers have no alternative but to adjust:

“...[SF enlists] the reader’s imaginative activity to fill in the gaps in the paradigm and create an illusion of reality (...) into the reader’s own presuppositions and cultural intervariants, questioning them and giving him/her the possibility of critical examination”. (1988: 70).

For Suvin (1988), the critical perspective is not forsaken and on the contrary is encouraged. When confronted to a hypothetical history, readers will test the Novums and their believability; they would refer to their empirical environment and produce judgments. Risks of dogmatic postures may arise and dismiss the author’s intent. Suvin traces cognitive dissonance without naming it. He links the cognitive estrangement to the repetitiveness of the narrems which stimulate cognitive consubstantial conflicts; ‘Invalidated narrative details oscillate between cognitive, non cognitive and anti-cognitive. Half way between fantasy and SF it often induces the reader into grey areas’. (1982: 71-72) These grey areas concern cases in which the readers fail in identifying the standpoint and making clear judgments about the narrative. Speaking of textual reception, this phase underlies a double problem: the misunderstanding of the author’s intentions and his awkwardness in yielding his propositions: “In that case, genological judgments become difficult relying as they do more on the writer’s guessed-at intention than on the incoherent execution”. (pp 70-71).

This Moore’s Paradox embodies the situation described by Suvin. This philosophical condition refers to cognitive and verbal contradictory statements, for

instance: one saying ‘it is raining, but I don’t think it is raining’. Moore described this condition years before Festinger had developed his empiricism-based theory. Both Moore’s Paradox ⁵ and Cognitive Dissonance Theory are cognitive biases. The inclusion of Novums in SF narrative does enhance the cognitive conflict when it comes to make a moral judgment or a personal statement. In pure communication schemes, it would be a fallacy between intention and reception, as outlined by Suvin the cognitive Novum would “relationship deviating from the author’s and addressee’s norm of reality” (1982: 76). The question of norms (moral, political, social) constitutes the basis of paradox and dissonance. Factually, if two norms are confronted within a text, or between an author and a reader, the coherence of the text, its reception, and readers’ responses are jeopardized.

Beyond recall, Darko Suvin has pointed the essential paradigms of SF’s narratology. Because of its novelty, the genre was detained inside a critical quarantine. Mocked and underrated, SF led off its maturation process and earned its reconnaissance. As soon as its seriousness acknowledged, SF’s reading angles shifted from aesthetics to poetics, and what was noted was its estranging nature. The introduction of cognitive Novums destabilizes both authors (misunderstood) and readers (stuck in decision taking). Irrevocably, Suvin places the historical and social norms as the point of discord in the reception of SF narratives. Before engaging in the discussion of readers’ responses, a special focus is made on the concept of cognitive dissonance that Suvin infers without naming. The next sections deal with conceptual underpinnings of cognitive dissonance and its incidence on readers’ responses.

II.2. Cognitive dissonance: conceptual underpinnings

II.2.1. Philosophical roots

The backbone of the study is cognitive dissonance in readers’ responses to Heinlein’s *Starship Troopers*. The paternity of the cognitive dissonance concept is attributed to George Edward Moore ⁶ and Ludwig Wittgenstein ⁷. Moore made a series of

⁵ See next section.

⁶ English philosopher (1853-1958) - whose concern was the shift from philosophical idealism to pragmatic analytical thinking, he questioned logic and contradictions in verbal statements. See *The Nature of Judgment* (1889) and *Principia Ethica* (1903)

conferences where he pointed the verbal statements of people expressing their contradictions. One of the most remarked example he used was the galvanized statement: “It is raining outside, but it is not raining”. This statement goes against classical logic and is, thus, inadmissible. If the speaker introduced doubt by saying ‘I don’t think it is raining outside’ instead, the statement would be *prima facie*. Wittgenstein is said to have been so impressed by this affirmation that asked Moore to re-lecture him in his private lounge. That was the birth of the ‘Moore’s Paradox’. Moore and Wittgenstein were have was intellectually bound by the Greek philosophy heritage. Aristotle and Plato have set the foundations of classical logic. Moore restored this intellectual axiom and highlighted the dissymmetry in formulation and statements. Classical logic emphasizes the three rules: the law of non contradiction, the excluded middle law, and the law of identity.

Classical Logic Table ⁸
Non Contradiction: absence of opposite elements within one framework
The Excluded Middle: no mid choice between opposite elements
Law of Identity: a thing is a thing, even if it is approached from a different angle

Table 1: Classical Logic Table

Moore’s Paradox does not stop at the verbal conflict; it does question the credibility of how a given knowledge was acquired. Incoherence and inconsistencies are not located in the verbal execution, but rather in the way information are processed. Moore asserts that there is a gap between knowing something and denying it and not knowing something and asserting it. Consequently, if there a contradictory statement induces a

⁷ Austrian British Philosopher (1889 -1951), disciple of Bertrand Russell, who founded the modern questioning of the philosophy of language. His major work was *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921).

⁸ Adapted from Moore quoting Sir William Hamilton, 9th Barone, *Principia Ethica* (1903)

notion of uncertainty it would be conceivable, but if it suggests a firm belief in ‘illogical’ elements that would be paradoxical.

Moore’s Paradox inspired numerous re-readings of the questions. The ‘Liar Paradox’, for instance, revolves around the typical case of a liar who avows that he lies and continues to lie. In saying so, the liar is, indeed, saying the truth. Ironically, he is hardly believed when he says the truth and belied systematically. Historically, the Liar Paradox was debated in antiquity and was bound to mathematical logic:

It was discussed in classical times, notably by the Megarians, but it was also mentioned by Aristotle and by Cicero (...). More recently, work on this problem has been an integral part of the development of modern mathematical logic, and it has become a subject of extensive research in its own right. The paradox is sometimes called the ‘Epimenides paradox’ as the tradition attributes a sentence like the first one in this essay to Epimenides of Crete, who is reputed to have said that all Cretans are always liars.⁹ (Beall et al. 2017)

The main difference between the Moore’s Paradox and the Liar Paradox was the area of concern while the Liar Paradox was debated in mathematics; Moore relocated it in the area of verbal interactions and grammatical consistency. Moore touched upon the cognitive processes involving contradictory statements, but did not go beyond philosophical framework. In linguistics, Charles Sanders Peirce’s¹⁰ (1882) inferences theories – adapted in Arthur Prior’s¹¹ denotation theses (1958) have linked the paradox with abduction. The latter is a state in which someone is taken away against their will. In Peirce’s logic abduction is an inference against the ‘corruption’ of textual

⁹ Beall, Jc, Glanzberg, Michael and Ripley, David, "Liar Paradox", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/liar-paradox/>.

¹⁰ See *Introductory Lecture on the Study of Logic*, 1882.

¹¹ See Epimenides the Cretan. *Journal of Symbolic Logic*, 23:261–66, 1958.

understanding. In other words, that would be pragmatism¹². Prior, who often cites Peirce, believes that there is an inherent paradox between truth and knowledge, and that multiple contradictory meanings can be found in a text. These preambles to Festinger's theory exuded the curiosity towards the cognitive mechanisms of paradox and inconsistency.

Incidentally, it is in literature that lambda readers may discover the embodiment of verbal and intellectual incoherence. *In Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949), George Orwell introduced the concept of 'Doublethink'. In his dystopia, the English novelist describes a world ruled by a despotic party whose slogans are the following: War is Peace; Freedom is Slavery; Ignorance is Strength. (1949: 06) The writer explains how the party installed a mental condition out of which develop "the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them" (p. 270). Orwell synthesized all the theories of contradiction and paradox in one paragraph:

His mind slid away into the labyrinthine world of doublethink. To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them, to use logic against logic, to repudiate morality while laying claim to it, to believe that democracy was impossible and that the Party was the guardian of democracy, to forget whatever it was necessary to forget, (...) to apply the same process to the process itself. That was the ultimate subtlety: consciously to induce unconsciousness, and then, once again, to become unconscious of the act of hypnosis you had just performed. Even to understand the word 'doublethink' involved the use of doublethink (pp 44-45).

¹²Pragmatism is a philosophical approach that validates theories only when they have practical outcomes.

Conscious of the scope of his world, Orwell virtualized a world-to-be, where organized deceit is a political tool in the managements of the masses via the exaltation of paranoia and incoherence. Orwell's Novums were politically and socially not that estranging. In fact, he extrapolated the Soviet Union's alienating ways to lay out his vision of totalitarianism; the pivotal point of the whole system would be instating large-scale contradictory logic. Done with philosophical premises, it did not take long for psychology to turn to the question of paradox and contradiction as cognitive processes.

II.2.2. Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance theory: literally thought conflict

Assuredly, Incoherence continued to fascinate philosophers until it was cognitive psychologists turn to focus on the issue. In his revolutionary work *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (1957), Leon Festinger exposed his description of the conflictive relation between two cognitions which are contradictory. The core of his theory is the resulting tension between beliefs and actions; certainties and decision making; all in search for coherence. The most classical example of cognitive dissonance is found in the smoker's paradox: 'smoking kills, but I won't stop'. Festinger's empirical studies detailed the anomalies encompassing decision making as well as the strategies used to confront or escape the choice.

Dissonance and consonance are relations among cognitions that is, among opinions, beliefs, knowledge of the environment, and knowledge of one's own actions and feelings. Two opinions, or beliefs, or items of knowledge are dissonant with each other if they do not fit together that is, if they are inconsistent, or if, considering only the particular two items, one does not follow from the other. For example, a cigarette smoker who believes that smoking is bad for his health has an opinion that is dissonant with the knowledge that he is continuing to smoke. He may have many other opinions, beliefs, or items of knowledge that

are consonant with continuing to smoke but the dissonance nevertheless exists too. (1957: 25)

The states and implications of cognitive dissonance are multiple and complex. Festinger identifies three states of cognitive elements that might or might not provoke conflictive tension (see figure below). When logic and decision making are not thwarted, a subject does not display dissonance. The presence of elements which are not logically bound (including the logic of contrast) display irrelevance. In another configuration, the co-existence of two elements which are not contradictory (but possibly complementary) provokes consonance. Finally, the conflictive logics create tensions and dissonance.

<p>Consonant: Items are balanced Dissonant: Items are conflictive Irrelevant: No visible relations between Items</p>

Table 2 : Cognitive relations

Festinger further investigated the mechanisms that interfere in the three levels of decision: predecision, decision, and post decision. He highlighted the states of certainty and uncertainty prior to decisions and the subsequent feelings of regret, satisfaction, or reversal desire. The work of Festinger examined decision related fallacies, in other terms all the cognitive biases that impede a 'sane' logical functioning. To name some, the most observed biases are: effort justification, rationalization, negotiation, information selection and so on. All the observed symptoms converge in the ascertainment that dissonant subjects display discomfort and, thusly, would endeavor to release the tension by looking for cognitive subterfuges to make the decision consonant, or at least minimize the guilt in case of regretful choice:

Dissonance produces discomfort and, correspondingly, there will arise pressures to reduce or eliminate the dissonance. Attempts to reduce dissonance represent the observable manifestations that dissonance exists. Such attempts may take any or all of three forms. The person

may try to change one or more of the beliefs, opinions, or behaviors involved in the dissonance; to acquire new information or beliefs that will increase the existing consonance and thus cause the total dissonance to be reduced; or to forget or reduce the importance of those cognitions that are in a dissonant relationship (1957: pp 25-26).

On selective exposure to information, Festinger asserts that the salience of dissonance is proportional to the selective process:” that favors consonant over dissonant information (1957: 64). The ‘natural’ state of any subject who is in a dissonant state would be the fulfillment of consonance and coherence through new information intake.

In their work *When Prophecy Fails* (1956), Festinger, Riecken and Schachter have already addressed the question of belief and dissonance in the apocalyptic prevision made by religious groups ¹³ . They anticipated the Cognitive Dissonance Theory in their study of rationalization, and how these groups make sense of a failing prediction as a comfort strategy. This strategy consists in ignoring factual information and adopting new fake beliefs. Almost every option is envisaged, except the confrontation of the failure:

Alternatively, the dissonance would be reduced or eliminated if the members of a movement effectively blind themselves to the fact that the prediction has not been fulfilled. But most people, including members of such movements, are in touch with reality and cannot simply blot out of their cognition such an unequivocal and undeniable fact. They can try to ignore it, however, and they usually do try. They may convince themselves that the date was wrong but that the prediction will, after all, be

¹³ Namely one group called the Seekers. This cult was established in Chicago and predicted the end of the world on December 21, 1954. Later, the group joined L Ron Hubbard, the founder of Scientology.

shortly confirmed; or they may even set another date as the Millerites did.... Rationalization can reduce dissonance somewhat. For rationalization to be fully effective, support from others is needed to make the explanation or the revision seem correct. Fortunately, the disappointed believer can usually turn to the others in the same movement, who have the same dissonance and the same pressures to reduce it. Support for the new explanation is, hence, forthcoming and the members of the movement can recover somewhat from the shock of the disconfirmation. (Festinger et al, 1956: 27-28)

Festinger et al have questioned the cathartic nature of dissonance, as it helps to ventilate negative energies and reduce hostility. For Festinger and his co-authors, the failure of verbal coherence with deep beliefs is not a case of catharsis, but rather a case of dissonance. *When Prophecy Fails* touched upon the unmovable religious faith and the systematic ‘failure’ of religious people to maintain coherence between verifiable facts and their cognition. In psycho-narrative terms, this is what Darko Suvin could call ‘Estrangement’; Suvin presented it as an authorial standpoint, while Festinger et al studied it as a collective self-inflicted condition.

In their 1959 article, *Cognitive consequences of forced compliance*, Festinger and Carlsmith hounded decision-making under forceful intimidation. They illustrated their theory by the ostentatious intrusive third-parts in the process of choice and action. Political correctness, social pressure, and fear of judgment are elements that force people to change their beliefs. The forced change modifies the person’s beliefs in adequacy with his speech, and makes them profoundly change his belief, minus religious ones. “What happens to a person’s private opinion if he forced to do or say something contrary to that opinion? (...) Under some conditions, the private opinion changes, so as to bring it into closer correspondence with the overt behavior the person was forced to perform.” (1956: 113)

In *Conflict, Decision, and Dissonance* (1964), Leon Festinger provides a further explanation. He believes that decisions do not have the same weight. Some decisions surpass the casual daily choice one may make. When it comes to moral questions, or issues that are related to deep convictions, individuals outweigh the conceivable and the acceptable, and ‘struggle’ to make the most adequate decision :“the more difficult the decision, that is, the greater the pre-decision conflict, and hence the greater the post decision dissonance, the larger is this dissonance reduction effect.” (1964; 06) Festinger manifested certain optimism in the human brain’s elasticity and adaptability in decision making. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that the reduction of cognitive dissonance is never warranted, and that residual conflict might persist in the post decision phase – provoking, thus, regret, opinion reversal, or resilience.

Beyond cognitive psychology, the theories of Festinger have been hailed as revolutionary and are implemented in various fields: human resources managements, the military, sociology, media studies, and criminology, to name a few. In this dissertation, it was coupled to the description of readers’ responses to a morally-controversial novel of Robert A. Heinlein. Before evoking the ramifications of the Cognitive Dissonance Theory in literary studies and narratology, a focus is to be made on a corollary theory: Cultural Dissonance. This option is meant to understand the author relation to his socio-historical and cultural context.

II.2.3. Cultural Dissonance, Anomie, and Retreatism

At first glance, cultural dissonance has no direct relation with cognitive dissonance, except, perhaps, the notion of discomfort. Indeed, cultural dissonance is also predicated on the tension resulting from the opposition of two cognitions; individual vs. social cognitions. For Matsumoto and Juang (2008), culture is a cognitive product : “Because values, beliefs, and norms, for instance, are cognitive products, we can view culture as being cognitive. In other words, cultures are nothing

but knowledge/cognitive representations translated into certain norms, opinions, attitudes, values, and beliefs¹⁴”.

Cultural dissonance often defined as a situation of malaise one might have vis-à-vis his society, culture, or era. In sociology, it is associated with a brutal change in an individual’s socio-cultural environment, and the process of the change of inadaptability the same individual undergoes to challenge or adapt to the change. One instance would be the present day arrival of migrants in Europe. The discomfort is two-sided: the migrants labor to adjust, while the locals, on the other hand, collide with another reality that ‘threatens’ their own comfort. At a given moment, cultural dissonance would provoke individual and mass-cognitive dissonances. Taking the migrants’ example local people may say: ‘I m not racist, but they would be better at home’. Such a statement is not overtly racist, but does imply xenophobic intentions. In cognitive dissonance terms, the locals would ‘fight’ between two cognitions: the fear of being called racist, and the non-acceptance of migrants on their territories.

Early traces of cultural dissonance theories are found the work of Emile Durkheim *Suicide: a Study in Sociology*¹⁵ (1897). In this book, Durkheim exploits the notion of anomie as the rupture between an individual and the social norms, and the beginning of deviancy. Hence, the individual is subjected to a persistent feeling of discomfort, and the outcome can only be alienation and crime. The American sociologist Robert K. Merton resumed the work of Durkheim and introduced his own version of anomie in his article: *Social Structure and Anomie* (1938). In this cautionary paper, Merton underscored the concept of deviancy, as the opposition between individual cultural goals and institutionalized means. In other words, when a society creates norms that do not match individual cultural goals, the same society considers the individual’s non-compliance as a form of deviancy. Merton provided further details by establishing a typology of individuals in regard to their compliance. These are spread over five categories:

¹⁴Matsumoto, D., and L. Juang. (2008). *Culture and Psychology*. 4th edn. Belmont, CA: Thomson Higher Education.

¹⁵See Emile Durkheim *Suicide : a study in sociology* 1897, reprinted 1951 . The Free Press

Conformists: individuals who adjust their cultural goals to institutionalized means
Ritualists: individuals who accept institutionalized means but reject cultural goals
Innovators: individuals who reject institutionalized means but accept cultural goals
Retreatists: Individuals who reject both cultural goals and institutionalized means
Rebels: Individuals who reject both paradigms and who attempt to create a new social order

Table 3 : Merton’s classification of cultural dissonance

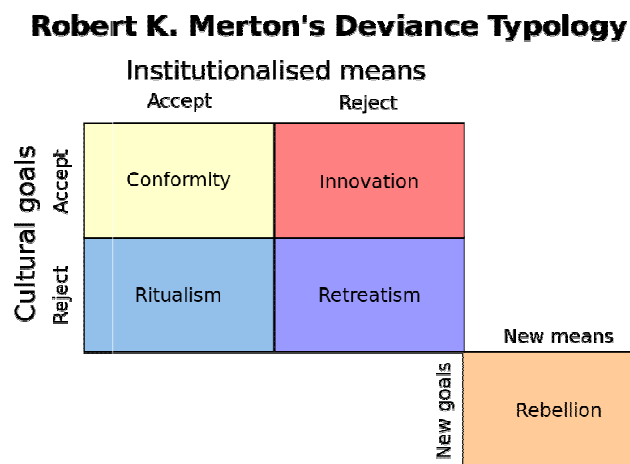


Figure 1: Merton’s individual typology and deviancy model

Enduringly, Merton’s theory is valid for writers who do or not fit in their context. . The changing nature of norms and the intellectual evolution of authors constitute literary canons that imprison writers in a temporary / constant etiquette from which they endeavor to get rid of, often, in vain. Heinlein’s ‘deviancy’ is a core stake in our study. Beside the interest we devote to readers’ dissonant responses, it is legitimate to question within an authorial perspective, the position(s) of Heinlein within this acknowledged theoretical framework. Heinlein lived many lives with social, cultural and historical prescriptions. Are the fascistic accusations institutionalized means or are they are they misunderstood cultural goals. This is what will attempt to answer later in the dissertation, as this theory would help to clarify Heinlein’s intellectual postures.

II.3. Psychonarratology, a transition to reception and response

II.3.1. The birth of narratology

Narratology is a relative recent literary discipline that descended from post-structuralism beliefs and semiotic orientations. Concretely, it purports to study the universal and the particular patterns that enclose storytelling; in other words, the codes and conventions that shape narratives. Narratology early forms date back to Plato and Aristotle. Antiquity philosopher questioned the relationships between the modes and forms of oral storytelling. It was not until 1928 and Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folk Tale* that the first academic essay on the conceptualization of the study of narration was validated. The mid-twentieth century witnessed the contributions of Claude Lévi-Strauss' *The Structural Study of Myth* (1955), Algirdas Julien Greimas' *La Description de la Signification et la Mythologie Comparée : Le conte populaire Russe* (1963), and Mikhaïl Bakhtin 's Dialogisme ¹⁶ in *La poétique de Dostoïevki* (1970) which have prepared the terrain for the birth of narratology.

The term was used for the first time by Tzvetan Todorov in the *Grammar of the Decameron* (1969). Todorov despoiled the text ¹⁷ from the mythological aura and denuded the narrative artifacts that constitute folk tales. Later the works of Gérard Genette (Figure II, Figure III 1972, 1983) expanded the perspectives of the discipline, and recentred the debate on the dichotomy: diegesis ¹⁸ vs. mimesis ¹⁹ . Genette established a series of unavoidable structural and rhetoric figures that constitute narratological acts. By the beginning of the 2000s, narratology embraced the trend of the theoretical framework of cognitivism. Cognitive narratology capitalized the breakthroughs of cognitive psychology and utilized them in a shift from pure textual to mind-related studies. Hence, a shift was operated from the study of narremes to the concern of the narrative perception. David Herman (1999) defines the discipline as a subdomain within postclassical narratology. In *New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis*²⁰, the scholar and the contributors pose the cognitive contours of cognitive

¹⁶ Dialogism is a term used by Bakhtin to describe the relation between the main narrator

¹⁷ The *Décameron* is a classical Italian collection of passion and erotic tales collected by Boccace

¹⁸ The act of telling a story.

¹⁹ The act of showing the world of the story.

²⁰ David Herman "Introduction." D. H. (ed). *Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, ,1999, pp 1–30.

narratology and what would be called later psychonarratology, and its variant siconarratology. The new directions were definitely established as narratology-adjacent disciplines.

II.3.2. Cognitive narratology

In Herman's *Cognitive Narratology*²¹ (2009), which synthesized the narratological ethics and their cognitive perceptions, appeared the inclination towards the autonomy of the discipline and its potential connection with the rising works of Rastier (2005) on Cognitive Semantics and in-textual lexical-grammatical perceptions²². Enhanced by, Jens Eder's article *Narratology and Cognitive Reception Theory* (2003), cognitive narratology was implemented as a method in film studies. Eder examined film narratology and iconography and their relation to readers' senses and perceptions. He avowed that the theoretical background of cognitive narratology is multiple and cannot be submitted to one methodological paradigm:

There are many different kinds of cognitive theory available for narratologists to exploit: theories of intentionality and imagination originating in the analytical philosophy of the mind, models of perception and categorization from cognitive psychology, and theories of textual interpretation from linguistics. Some of these approaches are empirical, others non-empirical, and they have a disparate range of essential basic concepts: some of them describe mental representational structures with the help of cognitive schemata, others turn to propositions or mental models (2003: 06).

Much influenced by cognitive psychology, Eder pleaded for a shift toward empirical and semi-empirical research in textual reception and justified it by an inevitable

²¹ In: Hühn, Peter et al. (eds.): *the living handbook of narratology*. Hamburg: Hamburg University Press. (2009)

²² Rastier, François. *Sémiotique du cognitivisme et sémantique cognitive : Questions d'histoire et d'épistémologie*. Texto ! mars 2005 [en ligne]. Disponible sur : <http://www.revue-texto.net/Inedits/Rastier/Rastier_Semantique-cognitive.html>. (Retrieved January 2015)

depletion of theoretical tribulations. These arguments - in favour of approaching the textual reception – would back my methodological approach to readers’ responses:

It should also be possible to use ... [the production analysis and ‘real’ meaning, or intended reception, of a narrative text] to analyse cases of probable or actual reception in an empirically identified or hypothetically postulated group of recipients. In other words, we should be able to analyse not only the story that is narrated, but also the story that is read or heard. In the case of the narrated story, we begin by using the textual data as the basis for hypotheses regarding authorial intention, communication strategies, and the like, and the characteristics of an idealized model recipient (e.g. the abilities and knowledge possessed by that recipient (2003: 04).

Instead of readers, he uses the term recipient as if there is a communication scheme between the author and his audience. Eder specifies that there is a: “historically and sociologically defined group of recipients” (P 04), and thus the textual perception is predefined by the societal and historical membership traits. Eder deplored the preclusion of studies on the emotional side of perception, and seemed to regret the over dominance of standardized mental structures. He argues that “emotional effects such as plot-related tension, curiosity, surprise, and empathy presuppose the representation of events” (p. 12). Cognition, reception, and emotion constitute the narrative experience – beyond the passivity that can endanger the reading process. The hypothetical or/ and the actual recipients are to be involved in the construction of meaning – by incorporation their emotional feedback: apathy, empathy, doubt ...etc.

Eder firmly believed in an empirical approach to narratology (the evidence being the inclusion of actual recipients) for the sake of instating a coherent interpretative model:

Narratology needs cognitive reception theories, but only as a general framework. Furthermore, not all cognitive theories are empirical; and if empirical discoveries are integrated into narratology, they are adopted not for their own sake, nor to give empirical narratology or reception research the go-ahead, but rather in order to develop an analytical model which has empirical support, is suitable for use in (but not dependent on) empirical research, and provides new heuristic resources (2003: 09).

The text and the narrative details, hence, would be the central object around which cognitive empiricism would gravitate. The edification of study paradigms is predicated on narrative representations (worlds, happenings, characters, and themes) and their verifiable perceptions.

Further, Eder insisted on the rigour of textual evidence to formulate reasonable hypotheses. The major risk in implausible assumptions could be intellectual wandering and the invalidation of findings. Eder joins Suvin's theses²³ on narrative logic and how readers can presuppose the inferences of the telling. The estranging propositions have to remain reasonable enough in order not to alienate the readers. Both Suvin (1988) and Eder (2003) see the narrative as an active construct; a mutual exchange between the author and the reader. Eder further explains – in quoting Branigan (a film theorist) that narratives are:” not in the text but rather in the minds of the recipients and producers. We are concerned, he argues, with a principle of reception that transforms textual data into a narrated world with a story in the course of cognitive processing” (2003: 13).

Branigan, quoted in Eder, sacralised the perception / reception process as a cognitive construct rather than as readers executing authorial instructions. There is a certain convenience (for my study) in departing from sacrosanct authorial meaning to the meanings ‘build’ by readers themselves – using their own cognitive attributes: memory, background knowledge, moral judgements, and decision making. Eder warns

²³ Found in *Suppositions and presuppositions in Science Fiction*, 1988.

against naive psychologism and favours a more scientific treatment of cognitive reception.

II.3.3. Psychonarratology: Foundations for the Empirical Study of Literary Response

Marisa Bortolussi and Peter Dixon (2003) have literally founded psychonarratology. Not that distant from cognitive narratology, this discipline shifted from the theoretical areas to the ground of empiricism. The main objective of their cautionary book was to set solid foundation for the psychonarratological approach of readers' responses, not only with unusual and highly elaborated research tools. In fact, they do not invalidate the casual approaches in measuring reader's mental constructions:

We believe that the most mundane methods imaginable (such as simply asking readers direct questions concerning the text) are often sufficient when they are combined with a careful delineation of features and constructions and when the investigation is conducted with due regard for the need to make strong inferences concerning their relationship.”
(pp. 41-42)

A turn was taken, the one of readers' response as a commonplace, notably by downsizing the potency of sophisticated empirical montage and the validation of simpler approaches. This statement goes also for readers' population choice which Bortolussi and Dixon define as a collection of individuals about which interesting claims can be made (pp. 44-45). For instance, it can be a geographically specific population, or a set of readers who share a high skill in a given language. They further assert that “there is no restriction on size, scope, or criteria for defining a population, and there may be any number of populations about which interesting claims might be made” (p. 45). As an outset, a readers' population can be the springboard onto the understanding of authorial intentions and textual features.

The proposed model is predicated on measurement and categorization. Concretely, the model can be devised into such various items as the differentiation between the ‘good’ or ‘bad’ reader and “even open-ended verbalizations” (op. cit. 45). Bortolussi and Dixon sustain that the same criteria be applied to textual analysis i.e. the constant quest of the material’s intrinsic and extrinsic particularities. The logical consequence, then, would be establishing links between the text and readers’ cognitive constructs. The authors of *Psychonarratology* accounted for the super-complex knowledge that real readers embroil to suspend their actual conditions and real life beliefs. They refer to Fludernik (1993: 446) and Gibbs (1999) in their explanation of the reading experience: “Fludernik’s 1993 treatment of the real reader was consistent with other narratologists’ views. In concluding that the real reader “needs to suspend his or her real-life beliefs in order to enter into a co-operative reading experience.”(2003: 69). In addition notice is made to the interactional dynamics in the construction of meaning :“Gibbs (1999) emphasized the relationship between authors and readers and argued that readers do in fact draw inferences about the historical author’s intentions in producing the narrative and are guided by these inferences in their interpretation of the story” (2003: 70).

Bortolussi and Dixon associated the reading experiences to the interaction that occurs in a communication process (p. 70). Sometimes meaningful; other times trivial, the author / reader relationship does involve negotiation given that they do not own the same background knowledge:

The reader and author do not share common perceptual ground, they cannot engage in communicative processes of confirmation and error correction, and the same text can be processed quite differently depending on the context, the knowledge and goals of the reader, and so on (p. 74).

In *Discourse and Word Order*, Yokoyama (1986) has labeled it as the ‘Author-Reader Contract²⁴’. This relationship is based on mutual consent and requires even

²⁴The theory was derived from Louise M. Rosenblatt’s Transactional Theory. See Towards a Transactional Theory of Reading. *Journal of Reading Behavior* 1, no. 1 (Winter 1969): 31-49.

cooperation more from the reader. An author – being a finite entity – would leave his narrative to posterity. His contemporary readers would make sense of the fiction with their historical knowledge. Non-contemporary readers do the same but with a historically-marked narrative. Thus a series of “transactions” take place:

The reader gives his/her consent, at the very beginning of the series of transactions, that s/he will find everything the author has to say relevant, and that s/he will accept all of the assessment errors and impositions. By being "ultra-cooperative" in this way, the reader allows the author to feel "ultra-secure", enabling the author to achieve an extensive and one-sided relocation of knowledge in a smooth fashion, and eliminating the need for the addressee's metinformational response. Many interesting theoretical implications for the analysis of literary texts follow from this approach to describing literary discourse, all of which cannot be pursued here (p. 144).

Bortolussi and Dixon sketched two communication / interaction models (See figures below) probably inspired by the author-reader contract. They introduced the notions of implied authors, implied narrator, and implied reader. The area in which the world of the writer (and / or narrator) intertwines with the readers' could be the contractual clause. Bortolussi and Dixon remain fairly careful in the non-confusion between author and narrator; reader and narratee. Even the reader is taken from the perspective of an author-projected vision of his potential readership.

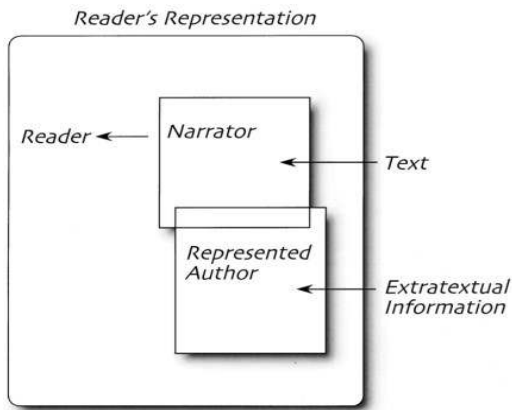


FIGURE 3.2. Relation between the narrator and the represented author.

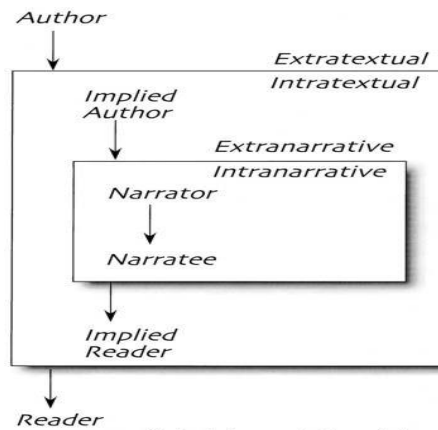


FIGURE 3.1. The levels of communication analysis.

Figure 2: Reader’s Representation
(2003: 75)

Figure 3: Level of Communication Analysis
(2003: 67)

Beyond the communication models, readers (or recipients as called by Eder) constitute the most active partner in the construction of meanings. If there is a failure in decoding or understanding authorial statements, it would be attributed to passive aggressive postures of readers, but not to the author’s intentions. In other words, when readers do not honour their contractual obligations, the intended meaning would seldom be achieved.

‘Good readers’, on the other hand, consent on adhering to the authorial propositions and engage in an introspective process that can lead them to anticipate future events, final twists or characters’ behaviours. One particular feature is the matching of characters traits with readers’ expectation horizons. (See table 04):

TABLE 5.2. *Trait Adjectives*

Story	Trait	Positive Adjectives	Negative Adjectives
A Day’s Wait	Friendliness	Friendly Sociable	Hostile
In Another Country	Humor	Humorous Comical	Serious
In the Hills	Dreaminess	Dreamy Scatterbrained	Practical Down-to-earth
Marbles	Curiosity		Uninterested

Table 4: Trait adjectives in characters’ description (2003:162)

On readers and the inevitable confusion author/narrator, Bortolussi and Dixon connect it to miscomprehension of authorial intentions. They further speak of a state of non distinction between narrator, implied author and historical writer (p.239). They grant that narratorial implicatures shape the extratextual identity of the author. The latter is built upon the readers' projection of their own experiences (p.239). It is not suggested that authors are 'victims' of their readers' optics. On the contrary, Bortolussi and Dixon point out that authors do interfere in their readerships' perceptions:

Although how much extratextual knowledge readers typically have is an important empirical question, we suspect that often if a reader has any knowledge of the historical author at all, it may be limited to general knowledge of the type of writer he or she is, what kind of reputation his or her books have, and so on. (p. 244).

Indeed, readers are constantly judgmental about authors. The reputation any author might possess is generally defined by his / her early novels. Thus intolerance might arise when the writer estranges his readership by radical thematic or stylistic choices. Bortolussi and Dixon highlight this evidence:

Under some circumstances, a work may alter or inform the reader's knowledge of the author. For example, if a story is perceived as a departure from the author's previous work, readers may revise what they know about the author. In turn, this new knowledge of the author may lead them to new interpretations of other previously read works (p. 245).

In like manner, readers' suppositions and presuppositions are shaped by the belief that authors must have a thematic coherence, out of which they cannot depart. This phase

of the reading experience unfolds a series of biases that ‘damage’ the intention/reception/response process. For Bortolussi and Dixon these: “Fallacious inferences are based on reputation. Readers possess individual differences, disparate literary expertise, and various reading amounts. They would name / describe the text accordingly.”(p. 245) These fallacies are one aspect of our study of Heinlein’s readership. Heinlein has a certain authorship aura, but owns a considerable number of detractors and heterogeneous population of readers; those who like *Starship Troopers* do not like the antipodal *a Stranger in a Strange Land*.

Prior to Bortolussi and Dixon, Gibbs²⁵ (1999) has already formulated his own theories on an authors’ reputation and its role in textual and extratextual reception. Reputation (being a trademark or etiquette) interferes in the making of readers’ expectation horizons and does alter reception, if it is prejudicial:

Moreover, is it really unfair to include knowledge of the author’s reputation in one’s judgment of suitability for publication? Just as statistical tests address the question of reliability of findings, so too the reputation of the author may provide indirect, supplementary information about the reliability of the findings. Asking authors to remove all identifying information in the peer review of grants would minimize or eliminate the important role of the author’s research “track record” in deciding the merits of the proposed research (pp. 188-189).

Gibbs (1999) associates readers’ fallacious reception/response to the amount of reliability they attribute to authors’ reputation. He emphasizes the fact that detrimental reception or responses are to provoke ungrounded partiality. Gibbs possesses his proper definition of a ‘good reader’. In the following statement he delineated what is expected from ‘good readers’:

²⁵Gibbs, R. W. *Intentions in the experience of meaning*. New York: Cambridge University Press; 1999-2000.

... Good readers must consider who the author is when reading news stories as well. Although news stories might attempt to be accurate representations of “facts,” the facts that are used and how they are assembled are shaped by the author’s biases and beliefs. For example, many people assess the accuracy and significance of news stories in the *National Enquirer* differently than they do stories published in the *New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal* (p. 192).

With attention to readers’ roles, Gibbs denies textual rigidity and unsurpassable meanings. For him, ‘good readers’ are active and hypersensitive to authors’ self-inflicted fallacies. In other words, ‘good readers’ are to be mature enough to distinguish between narratives and the reputation of the historical author or implied narrator. If this contractual clause is not fulfilled, mutual bias would alter reception and responses. Correspondingly, that would be the author-reader contract.

II.4. Readers’ Response theory and The Author- Reader Contract

Tightly bound to narratology and cognitive reception is the notion of author-reader contract. The latter is a non-synchronic²⁶ moral and cognitive commitment (or deal) between a writer and his potential readers. Fish (1967) theorized the ‘deal-breaking’ in *Surprised by Sin, the Reader in Paradise Lost*²⁷. His study of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* comprised a series of cautionary ideas on authorship and readers’ reception / responses:

If we transfer the emphasis from Milton's interests and intentions which are available to us only from a distance, to our responses which are available directly, the disparity between intention and execution becomes a disparity

²⁶ By non-synchronic we mean not happening at the same time lap. The time lag between the writing, edition, and publication of a narrative, on one hand, and the reception is random and undefined.

²⁷ Stanley E. Fish, *Surprised by Sin, the Reader in Paradise Lost* Palgrave Macmillan New York 1967

between reader expectation and reading experience; and the resulting 'pressures' can be seen as part of an intelligible pattern (p. 03).

The problematic of disparity between expectations and the findings is considered by Fish as conflictive and somehow oppressive (not to say source of dissonance). The line of readers' expectancies is generally called the 'Horizon Fusion'²⁸, and constitutes the encounter point of authors and their readers. The lines are not steady, but in constant motion. Fish brings forward the idea of partnership in the reception/interpretation/responses process. In *Doing What Comes Naturally Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies*, Fish²⁹ (1989) asserts that interpretative paradigms involves a synergy between the two partners. Fish convokes the theories of his contemporary Wolfgang Iser³⁰:

To the question informing much of contemporary literary theory what is the source of interpretive authority, the text or the reader? Iser answers "both." He does not, however, conceive of the relationship between them as a partnership in which each brings a portion of the meaning which is then added to the portion brought by the other; for in his theory meaning is something neither of them *has* (it is not an embodied object); rather it is something that is produced or built up or assembled by a *process* of interaction in which

²⁸ This concept was instituted by Gadamer. He defines horizon as follows: "Every finite present has its limitations. We define the concept of "situation" by saying that it represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. Hence essential to the concept of situation is the concept of "horizon." The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage." (2004; 301) Gadamer H-G. *Truth and method*. 2nd revised edition.. London: Continuum International Publishing Group; 2004.

Gadamer further explains the encounter of vision and perspective: "the concept of horizon suggests itself because it expresses the superior breadth of vision that the person who is trying to understand must have. To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand – not in order to look away from it but to see it better." (2004; 304)

²⁹ Stanley Fish, *Doing What Comes Naturally Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies*. Duke University Press, Durham and London, 1989.

³⁰ Wolfgang Iser (1926-2007) is one of the pioneer of Readers Response Theory, with Norman Holland and Roland Barthes.

the two parties play quite different, but interdependent, roles. The role of the text is to "designate *instructions* for the *production* of the signified (1989: 65).

Iser³¹ (1978) and Fish (1989) are united in the belief that the contractual partnership demand of readers to interact with the text on their own, and then, mutually to produce valid meanings. In their view, the author is a notwithstanding third part who can or cannot alter meaning. The reading experience is compared to a puzzle reconstruction, where the fabricant (author) does not have any significant role, once the final product (the text) is bought.

In the view of Umberto Eco³² (1979), the text urges the readers to enter in a mind game and sometimes perverts the construction of meanings. Eco claims that: "naturally, a text can also be read as an uncommitted stimulus personal hallucinatory experience, cutting out levels of meaning."(p. 40) For him, the reading contract involves abandoning certainties and deep convictions. This line of thought considers that the conflictive reception modes should not be occulted: "Besides, if the reader's inferences were planned and provoked, why should the text refuse and punish them as a deviancy? Why show so blatantly that they are inconsistent with the 'real' story"(p. 206). Eco manifests his comfort to a situation where readers are estranged; where they lose their logical landmarks and approach a state of mental 'deviancy', just because the text is so demanding. A corollary incidence of this complied estrangement might be the appearance of a cognitive dissonance or in other terms the rise of a tension in reception, and subsequently in responses.

Terry Eagleton³³ (1983) speaks of the contract with strong insistence on the authorial and readership common framework. Eagleton points the ambivalence of the narrative experiences undergone by readers:

³¹ Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.

³² *The role of the readers: explorations in the semiotics of texts*. Indiana University Press, 1979

³³ *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983.

Whereas the reader is shut out by a locked structure of ambivalences, reduced to admiring passivity, 'ambiguity' solicits his or her active participation: an ambiguity as Empson denned it is 'any verbal nuance, however slight, which gives room for alternative reactions to the same piece of language'. It is the reader's response which makes for ambiguity, and this response depends on more than the poem alone (p. 45).

The stated ambiguity is behavioral and can, hence, be labeled cognitive dissonance. Eagleton (1983) urges readers to confront their ambivalences and act constructively for the sake of producing coherence. He believed that texts do transform readers who have readability for change, and these same readers may venture into utter estrangement if they are conditioned:

The kind of reader whom literature is going to affect most profoundly is one already equipped with the 'right' kind of capacities and responses, proficient in operating certain critical techniques and recognizing certain literary conventions; but this is precisely the kind of reader who needs to be affected least. Such a reader is 'transformed' from the outset, and is ready to risk further transformation just because of this Fact (1983: 69).

Eagleton shaped the ideal reader and the ideal response under textual determinacy. (1983: 73) He further theorized the reading process as, sometimes, a historical dilemma (p. 121) through which readers get obsessed with the historical significance and prognostic ungrounded explications. In her PhD Thesis³⁴, Anne M. Canavan (2012) questioned the same subject in the reader's amplification of coherence. On this

³⁴ Anne M. Canavan, *Highly Reliable Narrators in Supernatural Fictions*, Phd Thesis Department of English Northern Illinois University, 2012.

matter she quotes Tamar Yacobi (1981) on fictional reliability and the historical reception:

Notably the work by Tamar Yacobi³⁵, who argues for five evaluations of inconsistencies in a work of fiction. The first is the genetic principle, which “resolves fictive oddities and inconsistencies in terms of the causal factors that produced the text without coming to form part of it: the creative process, the history of the finished product” and the author (114) (2012: 06).

The verisimilitude of an ‘ideal’ textual reception / responses is then linked to the epistemic subset readers have, and which they have to assemble in a link. Once the inconsistencies eliminated, the readers might indulge in coherent processes.

Done with the theoretical aspects of psychonarratology and readers’ responses, the logical sequence would be as Bortolussi and Dixon (2003) envisaged: empirical implementations of the ideas encompassing reception and responses. The next section will expose some of the most unavoidable descriptive and experimental insights in readers’ response.

II.5. Empirical and descriptive studies in readers’ responses: a literature review

As stated earlier, the last part of the dissertation is reader-oriented. The contributions cited in the previous section provided a comprehensive ground for the cognitive factors in readers’ responses. In this part, there is an account of the most noticeable empirical attempts from Beach and Purves to Odell and Cooper, to name a few. The elusive nature of the literary experience, its variation in reception, and the nature of readers complicate the task. One crucial point is: who are the readers? In class or in society; is it the fantasized reader or the ideal reader? The majority of the experiments were conducted in classrooms or in academic spheres. The study of readers’ responses

³⁵See : Fictional Reliability as a Communicative Problem. *Poetics Today* Vol. 2, No. 2, Narratology III: Narration and Perspective in Fiction (Winter, 1981) Duke University Press, pp. 113-126. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1772193>

has simultaneously been evolving at the theoretical and practical levels, with and without compulsory mutual feeding.

In the reviewed works empirical methods do mix with descriptive and analytical approaches. Yet, the academic tendency is inclined more towards descriptivism. This does not diminish the value of non-empirical approaches, but – on the contrary – sets ground for the unseen areas within readerships’ interactions with the texts.

II.5.1. Purves and Beach, the pioneers

Alan C. Purves and Richard Beach are considered as the founding fathers of empiricism in readers’ response theory. Their book *Literature and the Reader: Research in Response to Literature, Reading Interests, and the Teaching of Literature* (1972) is often used by literature teachers to measure their learners’ attitudes towards the textbook.. The book³⁶ was part of the Final report to The National Endowment for the Humanities project (1969-1972); a project which aimed at investigating readership in the US educational system. The central concern of the book was the elaboration of a standard readers’ response model. Purves and Beach (1972) charted a cognitive schema of four features: Understanding, judgment, response and satisfaction. (See table below) These constitute the main readers’ tendencies in the reading experience.

<u>Understanding</u>	<u>Judgment</u>	<u>Response</u>	<u>Process of Response</u>	<u>Satisfaction</u>
Information lack	General liking	Personal	Identification	Instrumental
Cognitive failure	Formal liking	Descriptive	Projection	Pleasure (Intellectual)
Psychological block	Liking of content	Interpretive	Catharsis	Pleasure (Emotional)
	Personal judgment	Evaluative	Insight	

Table 5 : Purves and Beach Schemata of Response³⁷

³⁶ Purves, Alan C.; Beach, Richard. *Literature and the Reader: Research in Response to Literature, Reading Interests, and the Teaching of Literature*. University of Illinois- Urbana and the National Council of Teachers of English, (NFAH), Washington, D.C. Sept. 1969-Jan. 31, 1972.

³⁷ P 36

For Purves and Beach (1972) a text is rarely unassailable, it is rather the readers who are unassailable and further elusive. They tempered the rightness or wrongness; the logic or non-logical answers of recipients by considering all responses as valid and utterly founded. The point in their approach was a focus on narrative content and how it elicits objective or subjective reactions. Beyond the taxonomical organization of responses, Purves and Beach assumed that open and hidden connections might occur between the four paradigms. Purves' classification was revived by Odell and Cooper into categories of answers and cognitive strategies. Later, in *Teacher's Introduction to Reader-Response Theories*, Beach³⁸ (1993) elaborated a triadic response model (see figure below) with five perspectives:

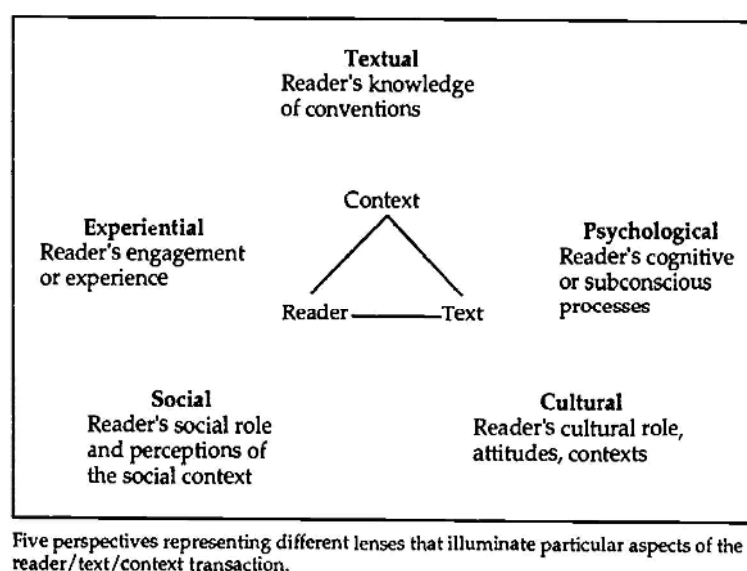


Figure 4: Paradigms in reader/text/context transaction³⁹

The contractual link between a reader and an author is defined by the illustrated paradigms. Beach's view socialized cognitive reception and replaced the reader as a pragmatic user of the text, in other words an actively engaged recipient employing cognitive strategies to create coherence (1993: 22) Beach referred to Christopher Collins' cognitive modes as ground rules for readers' response inquiry:

³⁸ Beach, Richard *A Teacher's Introduction to Reader-Response Theories*. NCTE: Teacher's Introduction Series. 1993. University of Minnesota National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana.

³⁹ P 08.

Retrospection : Recalling past memories Perception : Textual information processing Expectation : Anticipating information Assertion : Matching beliefs to textual data Introspection : Using intuition for processing data Judgment : Taking standpoints and decisions
--

Table 6: Christopher Collins' Six cognitive modes of visual construction⁴⁰

Inspired by Christopher Collins⁴¹, Beach (1993) derived a reader-centered model that categorizes recipients according to their attitude towards the text:

Literalists: readers' main concern is information Associationists: readers who associate narremms Construers: readers who envisage the narrative as problem solving situation Analogizers: readers are creative and provide symbolic interpretation
--

Table 7: Beach's typology of readers⁴²

Beach, subtly, suggested that analogizers are those who optimize the most their cognitive reception assets. The Construers on the other hand use their cognition in decoding the text, in a puzzle approach. According to Beach, the two other types of readers do not exploit the potentialities of the text, and often discard the meta-textual.

Purves and Beach have set the foundations of empirical studies in readers' responses. The models of Purves have inspired Cooper, Odell, and Michalak, to name some. The following section reviews the evolution of descriptivism and empiricism in the investigation of textual reactions.

II.5.2. Odell and Cooper, the succession

Elizabeth Anne Nicol⁴³ (1975) acknowledged the intangibility and elusiveness readers' responses and thus preconized the use of various approaches with two important issues: what do readers like /judge? And how do they perceive the texts? (pp 72-73). Nicol noted that the descriptive optics prevailed readers' responses studies:

⁴⁰ Adapted From Beach, 1993 ; p 90.

⁴¹ See: Christopher Collins. *Reading the Written Image : Verbal Play, Interpretation, and the Roots of Iconophobia.*, 1992.

⁴² Adapted From Beach , 1993, pp 91-92.

⁴³ *Designing Research on Literary Response*, in the Teaching of English, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Spring, 1975), pp. 72-79

Descriptive research, on the other hand, often requires nominal classification which is appropriate when the categories of data have no inherent order, when there is no rationale for scoring one response higher or lower than another. In this case one may describe the phenomenon without judging or evaluating it and without applying. (1975: 73)

Nicol advocated the creation of nominal clusters; a sort of taxonomy of responses ranging from scalable to the non-scalable on the basis of their elaboration (highly structured versus casual: see figure below):

FIGURE I
Schema for organizing research methods in the study of literary response.

		Structure of the Task	
		HIGH	LOW
Ordinality of the data	HIGH (Data can be scaled)	(1) The task is highly structured and the response is clearly right or wrong positive or negative.	(4) The task is open-ended and the responses are evaluated against criteria. Responses are right or wrong, positive or negative.
	LOW (Data cannot be scaled)	(2) The task is highly structured and the responses are classified but are not ranked according to criteria.	(3) The task is open-ended and the responses are classified or described but are not ranked according to criteria.

Figure 5: Literary responses research methods⁴⁴

Nicol (1975) pointed the notion of scalable data with a permanent risk: not obtaining accurate responses. Factually, readers are either convergent or divergent in terms of thinking modes. In producing judgments about narratives, readers might produce their own scale, if they are cognitively divergent from their peers. Nicol

⁴⁴Ibid, 74.

asserted that the whole point in readers' responses is their appraisal of the narrative. Subsequently, when a story does not arouse interest, it does not evoke responses.

Lee Odell and Charles R. Cooper⁴⁵ (1976) considered Purves' cautionary ideas and validated the cognitive perceptions as the chief concern of readers' responses. The readers' meta-textual knowledge (author's life and historical background) is retrograded as a secondary criterion. (1976: 203) Odell and Cooper (1976) defended the belief that readers produce judgments which are viewed as value judgments. Their studies on students' reactions empowered them to tell if students' (actual readers): "reading of a text is sensible, clear, consistent with the text, etc.; at worst, our comments tell students whether their reading is "correct," i.e., consistent with our own or a critic's understanding of the text." (1976: 203)

Odell and Cooper (1976) resumed Purves' categories and assumed that descriptivism should prevail over empiricism. The list, below, states the categories of evaluation of readers' responses:

<p>Personal Statement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. about the reader, an "autobiographical digression" 2. about the work, expressing personal engagement with it <p>Descriptive Statement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. narrational, retelling part of the work 4. descriptive of aspects of the work: language, characters, setting, etc. <p>Interpretive Statement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. of parts of the work 6. of the whole work <p>Evaluative Statement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. about the evocativeness of the work 8. about the construction of the work 9. about the meaningfulness of the work <p>This model is based on readers' statements / 24 subcategories</p>
--

Table 8: Statement types⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *Describing Responses to Works of Fiction*. Source: Research in the Teaching of English, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Winter, 1976), pp. 203-225

⁴⁶ Op Cit. pp 205-206

Personal engagement is expressed through the production of statements of personal engagement, perceptions, and responses. The descriptive statements move from personal conceptions of the text, and displace the response on the content of the narrative: themes, plot, setting, characters ...etc.

The model suggested by Odell and Cooper comprises thinking and feeling habits as well as verbal cues in identification. This model is both theoretical and procedural. Odell and Cooper intended to describe the variety of responses and the intellectual strategies encompassing these reactions. They believed that quantity does not ensure quality (pp 197-208). Furthermore, they focused on the content of the statements produced by the recipients as whole units of meaning, in a continuum, and not as independent segments. Henceforth, they analyzed the: "(...) ability to make a complex, difficult moral decision, Purpose, Instrument, Goal, Manner or any of several other categories that may underlie an assertion."(1976: 209)

Other non content-based paradigms are analyzed in the Odell and Cooper Model. For example: the focus of the readers and their relation with the text. The below-listed attitudes' questions enable the understanding of readers' responses:

2. What does he focus on outside the text?
 - a. Himself?
 - b. Some facet of his understanding, experience, preconception of the world (e.g., "Most people I know think that . . ." or "Reading the book was a real experience") ?
3. How often does he shift focus?
 - a. focusing on different sensory properties of a person or object or setting?
 - b. focusing on some category other than Actor?

Table 9: Other Focal Points⁴⁷

Answers are to provide indications about the readers' reception experience. An actual study conducted on readers of Faulkner's of *Mice and Men* has shown a sort of

⁴⁷Op Cit. p 211

conflictive attitude towards the narrative. Two readers itemized the elements of fiction and expressed discomfort vis-à-vis certain aspects of the story :

It is also reflected in our sense of some dissonance, disequilibrium, incongruity, or disparity (between appearance and reality, between the actual and the potential, between what we hope/fear/wish to encounter and what we do encounter) . For example, our response to George and Lennie, the two main characters in *Of Mice and Men*, has to be influenced by our awareness that they are in some way different from the rest of the characters in the novel. Further, our response is guided by our understanding of the ironies and paradoxes that characterize their relationship (1976: 211).

Odell and Cooper pointed contrast as one expression of (cognitive) dissonance and inconsistencies. The statements that include contrast linguistics markers are the ones that diagnose incongruities, and, consequently dissonance. (See Odell and Cooper's List below)

I. Connectors such as		
or	but	though
nor	however	although
else	nevertheless	in spite
lest	on the contrary	despite
otherwise	on the other hand	
alternatively	instead	

Figure 6: Contrast connectors⁴⁸

Contrast connectors are not the only indexes of cognitive dissonance. Odell and Cooper (1976) employed morphological markers: negative forms, comparison, and affixes that express contradiction, opposition, and potential conflict.

⁴⁸Op Cit. P 211

II. Comparative and Superlative Forms	
more/most	
less/least	
-er/est	
III. Negative words	
no	
not	
without	
nothing	
none	
IV. Negative Affixes	
anti-	dis-
im-	-less
in-	un-
ir-	non-
il-	
a-	

Figure 7: Comparative and Superlative Forms ⁴⁹

Besides, Odell and Cooper studied readers' use of lexicon. Concretely, they observed "the nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverb forms of synonyms for such words as contrast, paradox, distinction, difference." (p. 212) In here, Odell and Cooper tackled overtly the case of cognitive dissonance in the reading experience and the responses it convokes. The excerpted list ⁵⁰ below comprised all the variations of cognitive dissonance that I intend to employ in Heinlein's readers' responses:

- | |
|---|
| <p>1. Does he identify contrasts within the text}</p> <p>a. Within a single character (e.g. George's ambivalent feelings toward Lennie or George's sense of the disparity between his present state and the sort of life he hoped to lead when they bought a farm of their own) ?</p> <p>b. Between two or more aspects of the text (e.g., between two or more actions, settings, characters) ?</p> <p>2. Does he identify contrasts (disparities, incongruities, instances of cognitive dissonance) between the text and himself}</p> <p>a. Between a character's statement and the reader's understanding of some event, circumstance, etc.?</p> <p>b. Between some other facet of the text (e.g., a character's actions, motives, values) and the reader's own Image,4 i.e., his experience, hopes, values?</p> <p>3. Does he identify contrasts outside the text}</p> <p>a. Within the reader (e.g., ambivalent feelings, contradictory or incompatible values) ?</p> <p>b. Between two or more readers' responses to the text?</p> <p>c. Between two or more texts?</p> |
|---|

Table 10: Cognitive dissonance variations

⁴⁹ Op Cit. P 212

⁵⁰ P 212

The sum of these questions, already, constitute a comprehensive insight on the diagnosis of cognitive dissonance and its various forms: doubt, moral conflict, or inability to make clear judgments about a piece of writing, an author, or a character.

TABLE 3
Uses of Contrast in Responses to Three Novels

Uses of contrast	Kind of response				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Within text					
a. within a single character				MM-1 IM-0 SC-1	
b. between two or more aspects of the text		MM-1 IM-0 SC-0		MM-1 IM-2 SC-2	MM-1 IM-4 SC-0
2. Between text and Reader					
a. between character's statement and reader's understanding		MM-0 IM-1 SC-0		MM-2 IM-0 SC-0	
b. between some other facet of the text and reader's Image	MM-3 IM-1 SC-0	MM-1 IM-5 SC-7	MM-3 IM-0 SC-2	MM-0 IM-6 SC-6	MM-4 IM-5 SC-6
3. Outside text					
a. within reader		MM-1 IM-0 SC-0	MM-0 IM-0 SC-1	MM-0 IM-0 SC-1	
b. between two or more readers' responses	MM-0 IM-1 SC-0				
c. between two or more texts					

Table 11: the use of Contrasts to Three Novels⁵¹

Odell and Cooper (1976) attempted to scale contrast-related answers and scrutinize the narrative layers in search for the parts involved in cognitive dissonance: author and text; text and readers; text with another text, and author reader contract. (See table above) In this particular study (pp 214-215), they revealed that tested readers remarked the disparities of characters' behaviors and the way they face predicaments that oppose their personal wishes. The study was conclusive about readers' discomfort with the narratorial choices, and they that they back their answers with one reference – at least – from the text.

Cooper's next study (*Empirical Studies of Response to Literature: Review and Suggestions*⁵², 1976) endeavored to root empiricism in readers' responses study. Cooper acknowledges Purves descriptive schemes as the most complete option in considering statements about the literary experience. The category of engagement, for example, includes the following items: involvement, perception, interpretation and evaluation. (1976: 80) Cooper reaffirms the longevity of the Purves' Model:

⁵¹Op Cit. P 213.

⁵²In The Journal of Aesthetic Education, Vol. 10, No. 3/4, Bicentennial Issue (Jul. -Oct., 1976), pp. 77-93

The Purves scheme is more objective and inclusive than previous content-analysis schemes, and it has been used in various ways in a number of recent studies. It is sure to be widely used in the years ahead in studies where analysis of individual or group-discussion protocols is required (p. 80).

Cooper raised the possibility of individual or group discussion⁵³ as grounds to invest readers' responses. In this perspective, Cooper expatiated on readers' particularities and asserts that the idealized reader would never exist, as readers sometimes conceal a hidden perversity⁵⁴ that can bias their responses. When these perverse responses are produced, the whole process of reception is jeopardized. The ideal reader in Purves' and Cooper's views is a transparent reader who does not deceive the observers. The solution according to Cooper (1976) lies in detecting an analyzing "references to one's own experience and personal associations, what Beach calls 'autobiographical digression'." (1976: 80) Cooper reorganized the model of Purves into four categories:

- Personal Statement (engagement-involvement)**
1. about the reader, an autobiographical digression
 2. about the work, expressing personal engagement with it
- Descriptive Statement (perception)**
3. narrational, retelling part of the work
 4. descriptive of particular aspects of the work
- Interpretive Statement**
5. of parts of the work
 6. of the whole work
- Evaluative Statement**
7. about the evocativeness of the work
 8. about the construction of the work
 9. about the meaningfulness of the work

Figure 8 : Cooper's categories of reader's statements⁵⁵

⁵³ The idea of Cooper validates our use of readers' responses in Web forums in practical part of the dissertation.

⁵⁴ What is intended by 'hidden perversity' is the fallacious answers which do not match the readers inner beliefs.

⁵⁵ Op Cit. pp 80-81.

The produced statements, as to their diversity, would lessen the fallacies resulting from deceit and might harmonize the consistency of cognitive expressions. Cooper (1976) reported a detailed analysis of readers written responses. Though he did not pay particular interest to cognitive dissonance, he highlighted the processes readers use when they express contrast and discomfort:

1. Does the reader identify contrasts *within the text*?
 - a. Within a single character?
 - b. Between two or more aspects of the text?
2. Does the reader identify contrasts (disparities, incongruities, instances of cognitive dissonance) *between the text and himself*?
 - a. Between a character's statement and the reader's understanding of some event or circumstance?
 - b. Between some other facet of the text (e.g., a character's actions, motives, or values) and the reader's own experiences, hopes, or values?
3. Does the reader identify contrasts *outside the text*?
 - a. Within himself (e.g., ambivalent feelings, contradictory or incompatible values)?
 - b. Between two or more readers' responses to the text?
 - c. Between two or more texts?

Figure 9 : readers' use of contrast questions⁵⁶

Answers obtained from the above questions are likely to understand the standpoint of readers regarding conflictive issues in the personal statements. Cooper concludes that Purves, Odell and Cooper combined models insure a steady basis for the study of readers' responses.

II.5.3. The second generation

Zaharias and Mertz (1983) proposed a similar approach to Cooper's. Their concern was the standardization of responses patterns. Their work ⁵⁷ consisted in determining the extent of validity and reliability of measurement instruments:

In general, these efforts have been only marginally successful. It is recognized that this lack of success is

⁵⁶ P 82.

⁵⁷ Jane Ann Zaharias and Maia Pank Mert. *Identifying and Validating the Constituents of Literary Response through a Modification of the Response Preference Measure*. Research in the Teaching of English, Vol. 17, No. 3, (Oct., 1983 , pp. 231-241

partially due to the absence of valid and reliable instruments for assessing response and to the failure of many investigators to attend to the methodological, statistical, and conceptual difficulties which beset this type of inquiry. Moreover, the elusive and complex nature of response itself has served as a legitimate and pragmatic determinant to the depth and scope of investigation (p.231).

Doubtful about the scientificness of traditional approaches, Zaharias and Mertz sustain Cooper and Michalak (1981) in their claim that essay analysis as ‘the most valid measure’ in the study of readers’ responses. (1983: 232). The researchers tabulated⁵⁸ the reactions of poem readers on the basis of their subjective criteria: apathy, behavior validation, engagement, emotional response, and otherness. Within the same empirical framework, Zaharias and Mertz (1983) purported to describe the affective involvement of the same readers. They used their own variant of Purves’ model:

Table 2

Item #	Item	Classification	Purves’ Classification
2	How can the way people behave in the story/poem be explained?	Personal Statement— Character Behavior	Interpretation of Content
3	Does the story/poem succeed in getting me involved in the situation?	Personal Statement— Self-Involvement	Affective Evaluation
4	What does the story/poem tell me about people I know?	Personal Statement— Mimetic	Mimetic Interpretation
6	Does the story/poem tell me about people or ideas in general?	Personal Statement— Typological	Typological Interpretation
15	Is this a proper subject for a poem/story?	Evaluative Response— Subject Appropriateness	Engagement with Work in General
16	What happens in the story/poem?	Interpretive Response— Content	Perception of Content
20	What is the author’s opinion, or attitude toward, the people in the story/poem?	Interpretive Response— Author’s Tone, Attitude, and Mood	Perception of Tone, Attitude, and Mood

Table 12: types of affective responses⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Op Cit. P236.

⁵⁹ Op Cit. P240.

In the above table, Zaharias and Mertz (1983) updated Purves model by matching affective reactions to textual interaction. The notions of mimesis and perception were given a specific attention. Zaharias and Mertz utilized the 20 items to validate the reception and the reaction strategies to poetry. Less narrative than prose or drama, that genre allowed – despite all – the scrutiny of the cognitive processes involved in the potential figures of response.

Hynds' work⁶⁰ (1985) on cognitive reception proceeded the previous psycho-affective approaches to literary responses. She pleaded for the creation of a "hierarchically organized system of constructs or reference axes (e.g., "good-bad," "godly-ungodly") the social world. In so doing, individuals choose which make the most sense (that is, which afford predictability) in light of past events. As events existing perceptions, construct systems either change or stabilize. (1985: 387) In this option, Hynds claims that the varieties of cognitive complexities appeal for various responses, and that author/ character impressions differ from one reader to another. In her study of adolescent readers, she advocated a questionnaire-based approach on the author/character impression on the use of force in the narrative. Associated to the study of young readers' written compositions, the questionnaire aims at identifying teenagers' inferences as non-taxonomical elements. The nature of narrative (the use of force) revealed the super complex natures of perceivers. Hence the recipients expressed a large gamut of 'emotions' and such intellectual standpoints as otherness, empathy, stereotype avoidance. Even casual pitfalls (oversimplification and idiosyncrasies) were globally overwhelmed.

Marco Caracciolo's *Patterns of cognitive dissonance in readers' engagement with characters*⁶¹ constitutes the closest approach to our concern. Caracciolo (2013) sustained that the essence of the "conflict dwells in the subject" (p. 22) and that Festinger's theory does not only allow speculation, but further does call for experimentation in readers' responses studies. The point of focus in his proposition is the engagement with characters within a narrative. Caracciolo named his approach 'processual' i.e. more concerned with the process than with the results:

⁶⁰ Susan D. Hynds. *Interpersonal Cognitive Complexity and the Literary Response Processes of Adolescent Readers*. Research in the Teaching of English, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Dec., 1985), pp. 386-402

⁶¹ In *Enthymema* VIII. University of Groningen .2013 pp21-37

The indirect empiricism that I practice here is a first step in the direction of a more empirically oriented reception theory, which deals with flesh-and-blood audiences rather than with ghostly “implied” and “model” readers. Specifically, as the title of this article suggests, I am interested in *patterns* of reader-response, that is in the temporal and cognitive dynamics through which recipients of narrative deal with (and attempt to reduce) the dissonance that can be generated by their encounters with fictional characters (p. 23).

Caracciolo validates my proper choice to deal with actual readers in lieu of fantasized readers. His study implied women depiction of fantasized Muslim women in Malika Makkadem’s fiction and the experiential world of actual readers. His recipients displayed a responsive set of fitful reactions of doubt, disequilibrium and discomfort. The whole study revolved around the readers’ validation or invalidation of characters’ choices. Caracciolo reminds that Festinger’s theory does not only diagnose but further suggests the reduction of cognitive dissonance: “Dissonance is firmly anchored to the realm of action and behavior: an “internal” conflict between two incompatible attitudes does not by itself create dissonance, but only the “acting out” of those attitudes in the public, intersubjective world” (p. 25).

Caracciolo considered the verbal (or written) statements of the readers as the act of decision making. This action has to be matched with beliefs and judgments. Consequently, when a reader probes (or does not) a character’s choice, he is supposed to reduce the cognitive disequilibrium when producing judgments:

As Cooper puts it, “the self is a potential standard of judgment that we use to assess whether a behavioral consequence is aversive or not” (115). We will see in the next section that what psychologists call the “self-concept”

is deeply implicated in people's responses to literary characters (p. 25).

From this angle, the researcher's goal ought to be the understanding of the readers' self-concept and trace the conflictive areas when these 'egos' collide with a 'weird' narrative proposition. Caracciolo quoted Cooper's theory on the judgmental patterns followed by readers. Both believe in the inexorable finitude of human condition (p. 25) , and that readers have proper system of values that they invoke when they make decisions about the acceptability (or not) of a narrative:

Narrative tends to foreground characters' beliefs, attitudes, and evaluations, since the particularity of such mental states contributes to a text's narrativity. It is in considering and to some extent sharing these "cognitions" that, for audiences of narrative, the vicarious experience of dissonance can turn into a full-fledged experience of dissonance (p. 26).

The pertinence of Caracciolo's semi-empirical method lies in its identification of the areas of cognitive dissonance by highlighting the major paradigms of narrative reception and readers' reactions. The figure, below, provides the major phases of cognitive dissonance in the reception/process:

Reader's transactions: negotiation bargain Attitude change vs. imaginative resistance Forward logic introduced by the narrator Vicarious dissonance
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Table 13: Phases of dissonant reception/response⁶²

⁶²Op Cit. P 30

Caracciolo (2013) drafted – in parallel – the cognitive consequences of a narrative-dissonant reception/response: readers feel prejudiced. Then they speculate, adapt / adopt, probe, and finally reduce cognitive dissonance. What he names the grey area is in fact the area of cognitive dissonance (see figure below). It does involve the reader's attempt to confront the conflict between his beliefs and his decision:

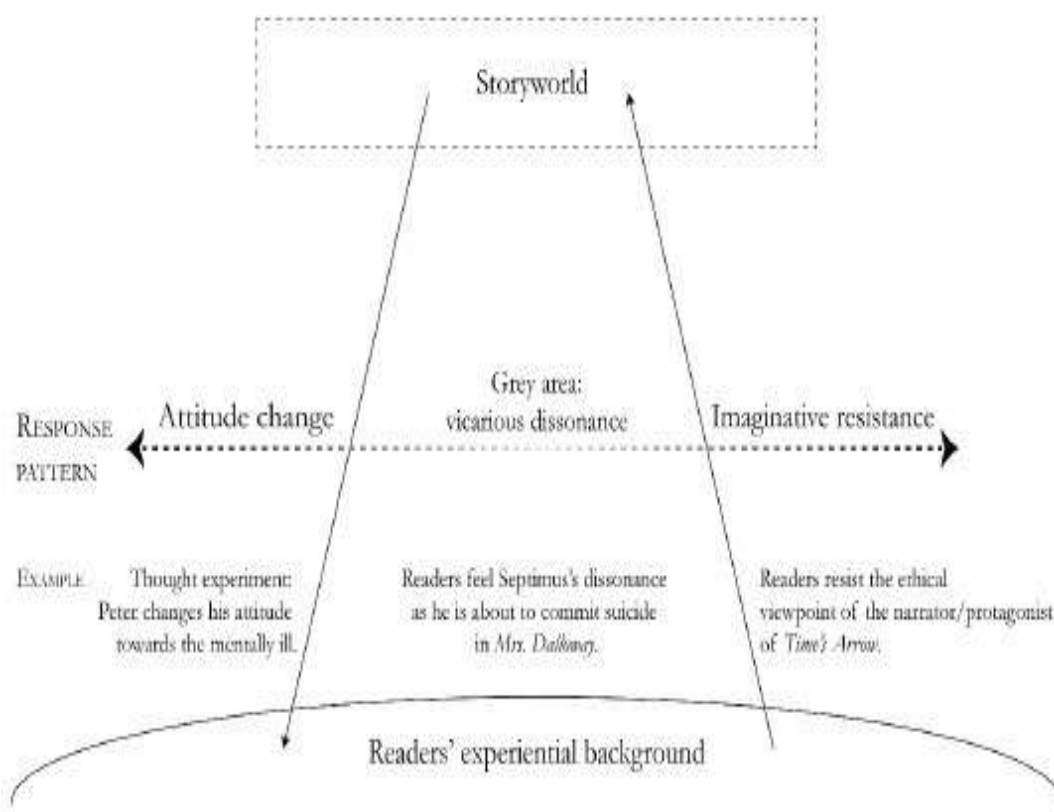


Figure 10 : Patterns of cognitive dissonance in readers' engagement with characters⁶³

II.6. A moderate criticism: the missing link

The aforementioned approaches to the literary text and cognitive dissonance have been drafted in the 'pre-digital' age on actual readers. They have set a relatively comprehensive theoretical and methodological framework for the detection of

⁶³ Op Cit. P 34

cognitive dissonance within readers' responses. The philosophical and intellectual roots of the study contradiction have been exploited within reception theories.

The conceptual input of Darko'Suvin cognitive estrangement and Festinger's CDT are tools that can be superposed to each other in the textual and meta-textual; contextual and non-contextual investigation of in-text dissonance and their incidences on readers. Nevertheless, the missing paradigm, in this context, is the notion of sentiment analysis in readers' responses. The advent of the digital modes of fiction reading (and responding to it) has partially outdated the classical approaches to the literary text. Additionally, little is found neither on the study of cognitive dissonance in science fiction authorship and readership, nor CDT as a paradigm in sentiment analysis.

In lieu, I will propose in the fifth and sixth chapters a readers' responses sentiment-based study predicated on the detection and understanding of cognitive dissonance. In this measure, I will place a considerable distance between the text, the author, and the readers – for the sake of understanding the scope of cognitive bias in and out of Heinlein's fiction. Thus, a complementary set of theory-method is retarded to adjust to the emergence of distant reading as the final trajectory of the dissertation.

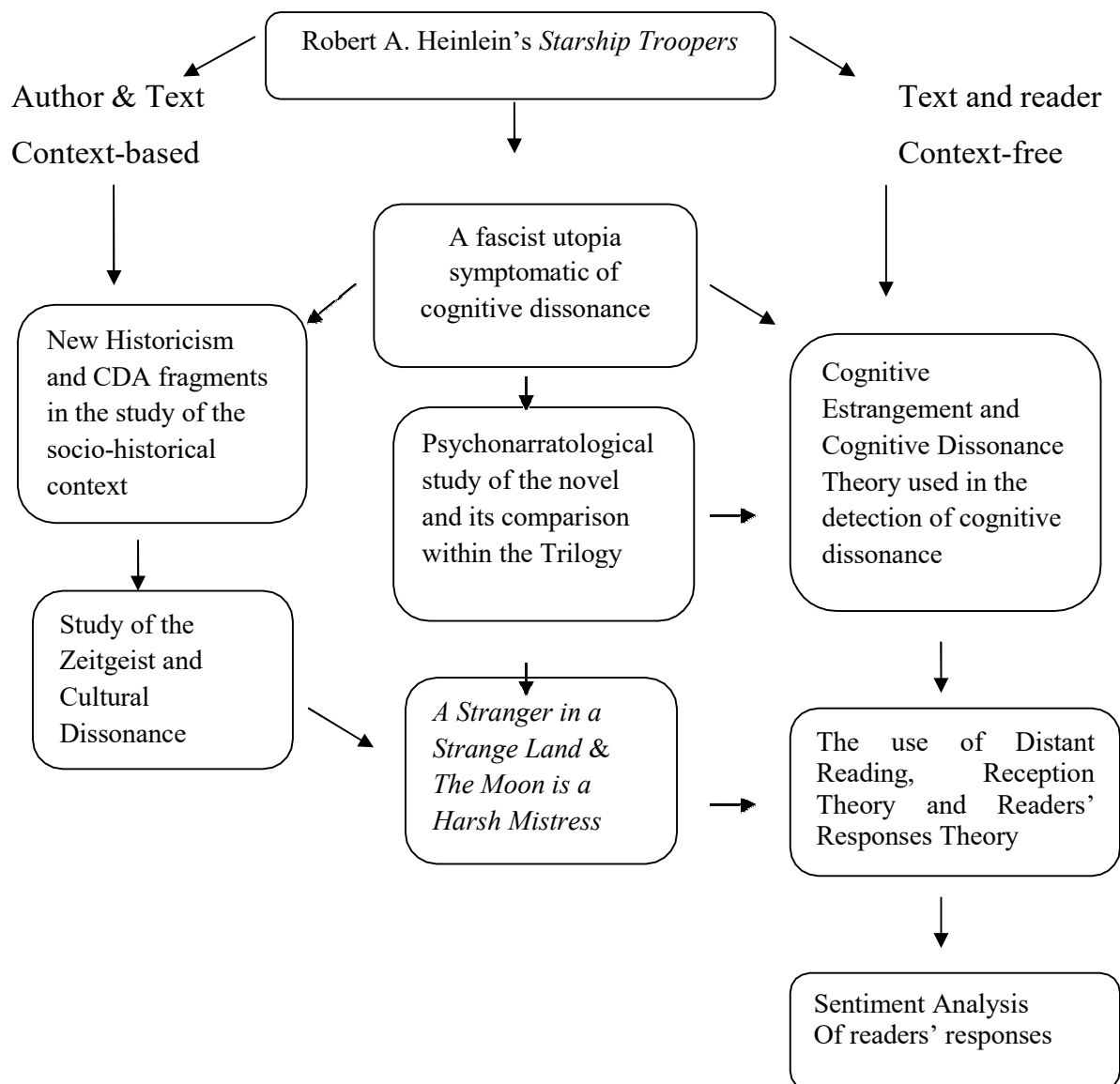
Conclusion

This chapter presented an abounding ensemble of theories and potential methodologies that enable new directions in literary studies, in general, and literary responses in particular. This exhaustive exposition of theories is legitimated by the emergence of complexity of the topic and the anticipated emergence of distant reading. The conceptual framework puts in evidence three lines of inquiry: estrangement, anomie, and more importantly cognitive dissonance. These notions are searchable within the scope of the fiction of Robert A. Heinlein, who is estranging, culturally dissonant, and contradictory. The completion of this ascertainment passes by the understanding of the psychonarratological artifacts found in his works, and further through their possible transmissibility to his readership. Hence, the cautionary works of Purves, Beach, Odell, Cooper, and Michalak have debunked academic research in literary reception and responses. Belatedly, empiricism invaded literary studies and permitted the study

of readership attitudes and habits. Yet, the advent of cognitive sciences marks a turn towards cognitive psychology and data-mining. Consequently, the discipline promises to extend to unsuspected fields of studies.

In the next chapter, three novels of Robert A. Heinlein are studied from a psychonarratological standpoint. The ‘trilogy of freedom and self responsibility’ is subjected to a psychonarratological analysis – in search for discursive dissonance. Moreover, the novels will be matched with their socio-historical context in order to detect cultural dissonance or consonance. The selected novels mirror three different literary discourses ranging from pseudo-fascism to libertarianism and anarchism. Within these works, the concepts of fascism and utopia are barely distinguishable as the writer himself hesitates in defining stable canons of freedom, liberty, and self-responsibility. Thus, the ‘oxymoron fascist utopia’ would translate the hesitations, contradiction, and inconsistencies of both Heinlein and his readership.

Theoretical Scaffolding



Conclusion to Part One

This part set the socio-historical context of Robert A. Heinlein. The aim was to understand his life and works and to establish reading prism of some his works. In his rich and tumultuous career, the writer has recorded the major political, social, and cultural changes of the Twentieth Century: the advent of totalitarianism, McCarthyism, the Hippie movement, and space conquest. His narratives captured the wavering world and its fears; servitude, freedom, and self-fulfillment have been addressed in an unusual manner - provoking fascistic allegations regarding his themes (*Starship Troopers*). Heinlein reversed the established reputation by proposing two libertarian novels (*A Stranger in a Strange Land* and *the Moon is a Harsh Mistress*) that shattered the preconceived ideas on his actual political affiliation. The study of the context revealed his authorial complexity and a remarkable inconsistency. Consequent to this ascertainment, I built a theoretical framework to study this dissonance within his oeuvre and its repercussions on his readers. The complexity of the persona and the diversity of his themes invited to an interdisciplinary theoretical proposition involving contextual approaches (socio-historical) and context-free approaches (Psychonarratology, cognitive reception, and reader's response theory). Therein, I resorted to methodological approaches derived from descriptive and empirical studies to detect cognitive and its potential transmissibility. The works of Darko Suvin, Leon Festinger, Dixon and Bortolussi, Alan C. Purves, and Richard Beach were crucial readings in the elaboration of the coming parts of the dissertation.

PART TWO

The study of Heinlein's Trilogy of Liberty and Self Responsibility

Introduction to Part Two

Part two, composed of chapter III and chapter IV, is a psychonarratological account, than an analysis of Heinlein's Trilogy of Liberty and Self Responsibility: *Starship Troopers*, *A Stranger in s Strange Land* and *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*. In other words, it is a review of the most prominent narrems in the trilogy. Marketed and sold, by Heinlein, as homogenous expressions of utopia, the three novels mismatch the author statements about freedom and authority. The aim is to understand the evolution of the writer's discourse and his utopian views, and eventually to detect cultural and cognitive dissonances. The account is predicated on the most significant narrems in these fictions. Then, the meanings are adjusted and analyzed in regard to the socio-historical context: McCarthyism, Hippies, and cultural anarchism. The following chapter (IV) establishes a critical condition of the works of Heinlein in relation to the film adaptation made by Paul Verhoeven and Ed Neumeier. The misappropriation of Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* magnified the original material and revealed other forms of reprobation - under the form of a conflictive reception / response to the narrative.

The reading of the three novels unveils progressively the political and societal prisms that interfere with textual overtones. Each narrative is envisaged as a social or political statement of utopian ideals: military fetishism, libertarianism, and anarchism. What appears is that *Starship Troopers* antagonizes the two other narratives on the questions of war and peace. For instance, while war is a prerequisite to liberty in the *Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, it is gratuitous and anticipatory in *Starship Troopers*. This condition presents a certain conundrum: who is really Heinlein? Are there two 'Heinleins'? Or is it the same writer entangled in contradictions?

The preliminary answers are found in the political historiography of the narratives: the trilogy was published during less than a decade (1959-1966). Hence, the fuliginous metamorphosis of Heinlein from an ultra neoconservative to a Hippie and anarchist cannot be explained solely by maturation in thinking, nor schizophrenia. The track of cognitive and cultural dissonances is valid and investigable. In this respect, Robert K. Merton's Theory of Deviancy (see previous chapter) accommodates the fact that Heinlein was offset against his epoch. This section will, also, demonstrate that the

writer has anticipated counter culture and even the millennial imperialism (09/11, and the War against Terror).

The *Starship Troopers* film adaptation is – according to its producers – the expression of their conflict with the narrative (cognitive dissonance) and an attempt to bargain with the fascistic overtones found in the themes of militarism and the dehumanization of the enemy. Thus, Heinlein's fiction earned a second appraisal condition in the emergence of new forms of reception and criticism - subsequent to the film adaptation. This part exposes the professional readers' reception and responses to *Starship Troopers* and points at the inconsistent beliefs and judgments provoked by the novel and film.

Chapter III

A Psychonarratological Analysis of Starship Troopers, A Stanger in a Strange Land, and The Moon is a Harsh Mistress

Introduction

Chapter III deals with the psychonarratological study of Heinlein's Trilogy of Liberty and Personal Responsibility. According to the writer's testament *Starship Troopers*, *A Stranger in a Strange Land*, and *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* are similar fictions that glorify freedom and self-empowerment. It is challenging for readers to find a common track between the three novels because of the diversity of the tones, themes, and motives. Nevertheless, the assertiveness of the writer about his own prose raises sneaking suspicions as to his definition of coherence and consistency. The density of the stories, the political resonance of a crucial decade, and the multiplicity of interpretations do entangle the readers in contradictions: where is the line between fascism and utopianism?

The political grammar of Heinlein's discourse thwarts the dominant doxa: he is militaristic when the USA opts for appeasement; libertarian when McCarthyism suffocated the country and anarchist when the Hippie movement opted for gentrification. In Merton's lenses Heinlein is sometime a Retreatist and the other times a Rebel. Having little concern for his reputation, Heinlein dared to propose alternative visions of utopia – be it jingoistic, sexual, anti-clerical, agitating, or nihilistic.

III.1. Heinlein the elusive Writer: Three Novels, Three Visions.

Robert A. Heinlein optimized narration in SF. Since the Golden Age, he published serialized novels in pulp magazines (1939), and soon denoted an extraordinary craftsmanship in creating parallel universes – ending by winning several Hugo Awards (the highest distinction for SF writers). From his first novel *Beyond this Horizon* to *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, he never ceased to be the prolific writer of what he (himself) calls speculative fiction¹.

Heinlein developed a typical style that will later leave prints of his authorship. Going crescendo in the narrative possibilities, he ended up his views with the concept of ‘future history’ associated with a social critique. In *Life-Line* (1939), he placed Hugo Pinero (the main character) at the center of all SF stereotypes on race and ethnicity. Obviously, he could not have a black as a central protagonist; he had him white, but not that white. He was a Latino. The plot revolves around Pinero, a scientist who invents a time travel machine that predicts deaths. Soon, he became the object of persecution by insurance companies and scientific authorities, he was assassinated and the machine was destroyed. In his first published story ², Heinlein earned his reputation of a social critique and historian of the future. The plausibility of his narrative, including the moral and philosophical issues made him a source of inspiration to as such serious institution as the NASA³. Many scientists and cognitive neurologists acknowledge the creative prophecies of Heinlein in space equipments and cognitive neurosciences.

He wrote stories that were often in a simple rich style. Full of meticulous descriptions of the physical settings, his fiction includes systematically a personal commentary in the form of clear statements or a more discrete overtone. In *Beyond this Horizon* (1942), he crafted a utopian design based on fair economy and eugenics. In this society, humans have reached a state of balance between individualism and collectivism. Order is maintained by fire guns and state-oriented violence. Halfway between the philosophy of Heidegger (übermensch / supermen) and biblical precepts

¹ Source: Eric S. Rabkin Lectures : Masterpieces of the Imaginative Mind: Literature’s most Fantastic Works: Lecture 21: Robert A Heinlein, He Mapped the Future. University of Michigan Ann Arbor.

² Published in *Astounding Science-Fiction* Magazine

³ See Discovery Science Channel’s Documentary: *Prophets of Science Fiction 07 : Robert A. Heinlein*, 2012.

(reincarnation and salvation), this novel sets the tone of Heinlein's future works: a blend of religion, SF, and moral concerns.

His 1951 novel *The Puppet Masters* attracted readers' attention to a writer obsessed by the Cold War, paranoid thoughts, and minds control. This obsession of the aliens is mixed with suspicions around the intentions of the Section (name of the agency that is supposed to fight the intruders). Along the narrative, we learn that the head of the Section's head the Old Man is controlling every human. Ahead of McCarthyism, Heinlein personifies the fear of the Reds in an aliens' pernicious body/mind invasion. This novel inspired Hollywood's classic the *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), directed by Don Siegel. The black and white film rendition of Heinlein's classic accentuated the sentiments of dread from xenomorphic creatures (the Soviets in the subtext), and confirmed the talent of the writer in anticipating the fears and aspirations of his compatriots.

The legacy of his fiction is found in post Golden Age SF. Many writers followed either his themes or the structures of his novels. *Starship Troopers* (1959) marks his exit from the Cold War torpor and the desire of the USA to retaliate. This highly controversial novel evacuated the state of fear – prevailing all over the decade – and theorizes a fierce response to the enemies of the 'Free World'. Accused of promoting fascist ideals, the novel was adapted by Ed Neumeier and Paul Verhoeven into an even fiercer 'propaganda film' – denouncing the drifts of US imperialism. *Starship Troopers* (1959) served as model to Joe Haldeman *The Forever War* (1974); both stories are on a soldier's education. Haldeman proposes a view of soldiers doing attacks through time - in synchronicity with the Vietnam War. Orson Scott Card's *Enders Game* (1985) follows a similar narrative approach of Heinlein's novel: the world in a total war against insect-like aliens (The Buggers) is forced to retaliate, and set a school for soldier training. None of these writers were accused of promoting fascist ideas. On the contrary, both novels were hailed as monuments of anticipation.

Heinlein's name was no longer systematically associated with fascism when he published *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961). The novel's thoroughly libertarian tone destabilized the *Starship Troopers* readers, who two years earlier, read a militaristic manifesto. The book earned a cult status in its depiction of free love, peace, and a

universal message of tolerance and understanding. Exit all forms of hatred of the aliens, the Martians are, by now, a fascinating life variety that is able to save humans and lead them to a better existence. *Stranger in a Strange Land* became the pillow book of the adepts of the Hippie Movement, and The Church of All Worlds - an alternative religion suggested in the book - matched the Hippie thought. This cult purports to federate humans around what McCarthyism had damaged: otherness and faith.

In *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* (1966), Heinlein went further in libertarianism and offers a personal rendition of the American War of Independence (1775-1783). The novel chronicles a lunar revolt opposing the locals to the omnipotent Earth Federation. The story clearly supports the oppressed and critiques the dictatorial tendencies of the terrestrial authority. Hence, Heinlein continued to disconcert his fans: those who loath *Starship Troopers* adore *A Stranger in a Strange Land* and *the Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, and vice-versa.

Other readers prefer to see a logical continuum in his fiction. One worth noticing fact would be his consistency in depicting Father / Son relationships. In fact, Heinlein's major narrative universe includes a young man attempting to emancipate himself from a biological father's authority, and embracing a spiritual / philosophical father's ideas: Rico/Dubois, in *Starship Troopers*; Valentine Smith/Jubal, in *A Stranger in a Strange Land*; and Manual / The Professor in *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*. In so doing, Heinlein titillates a deep biblical concern and emulates the fundamental human conflicts in supernatural / futuristic settings.

Heinlein's late fiction (1980- 1987) was met with caution and perplexity. Accusations of racism in *Fanrham's Freehold* (1964) were revived against him. Others claimed that he no longer has something to say. Heinlein -himself- seems to believe that his major works were the three-mentioned-above novels. He synthesized the core of his thematic concerns in the following statement:

If a person names as his three favorites of my books
Stranger, Harsh Mistress, and Starship Troopers ... then I

believe that he has grokked⁴ what I meant. But if he likes one—but not the other two—I am certain that he has misunderstood me; he has picked out points—and misunderstood what he picked. If he picks 2 of 3, then there is hope, 1 of 3—no hope. All three books are on one subject: Freedom and Self-Responsibility⁵ (p. 28).

In Patterson's book of interviews, Heinlein substitutes himself to his own readers, and establishes three of his major works. He asserts that a reader who likes the three novels has certainly understood his narratives. Heinlein affirms that these novels deal with freedom and self-responsibility. If so, how can readers be so misled when they pass from *Starship Troopers* to *The Moon is A Harsh Mistress*? The hectic confusion caused by the nature of the themes urges for a reconsideration of Heinlein's authorship and the incidences it has on his readers. What is seen as constant in his fiction (more than side effects of his major concerns) are the filiations' links, and how the descendents overthrow the kinship.

In Patterson's *Robert A. Heinlein: in Dialogue with his Century* (2010), Robert A. Heinlein's only references to fascism are in comparison to socialism and communism. The following commentary illustrates certain ambiguities:

Let me go on record that I regard communism as expressed by the U.S.S.R. and its friends here and elsewhere as a grisly horror, a tyranny maintained by force and terror, utterly subversive of human liberty, freedom of thought, and dignity. I regard it as Red fascism, distinguishable from black and brown fascism by differences of no importance to me nor to its victims." (Vol. 1, p. 149)

⁴ A word coined by Heinlein in *A Stranger in a Strange Land* which means assimilating literally, absorbing, and ultimately understanding.

⁵ In William H. Patterson Jr., Robert A. Heinlein, Vol 2: In Dialogue with His Century Volume 2: The Man Who learned Better

By eluding frontally the question of fascism the author and his biographer nurture doubts about the writers 'real' position about fascism and fascistic precepts. What is taken for granted is Heinlein's rejection of communism and the Soviet Union. Less is known about his postures regarding other authoritarian regimes. Although he makes reference to Mussolini's Fascism and Hitler's Nazism, he asserts they that made less deaths and casualties than Stalinism.

Heinlein's repetitive forays in political commentaries are sometimes consonant with his era, and other times not. When he makes an apology for militarism and the virtues of order, in *Starship Troopers*, he is (or not) aware that this narrative was published barely a decade after his country's victory against fascism. It is then natural to have vivid reactions in a time where pro-militaristic ideas were not well seen. In addition to that, defending authority and self-abnegation during McCarthyism was another probable cultural fallacy. Nevertheless, with *A Stranger in a Strange Land*, he anticipated the Hippie Movement and reconciled anti-fascists with his craftsmanship as a storyteller. The case of *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* is unsettling. That narrative possesses the go-to-war spirit of *Starship Troopers* and the rebellious mindset defended in *A Stranger in a Strange Land*. These signature novels have things to reveal about their author.

Before engaging in the study of cognitive dissonance within Heinlein readers, a look inside his text is needed. An inner cognitive dissonance of Heinlein's oeuvre and his probable cultural dissonance with his time/space have to be established. In other words, perhaps it is the author's bibliography that is not consistent, and thus it reflects cognitive and cultural dissonances. A closer look at the Heinlein's 'favorites' would clarify the grey areas. The novels are studied in the chronological order of their publication. The purpose of this approach is foster the idea that Heinlein had undergone a maturation, moving from juvenile fiction to an adult proposition of the world to be.

III.2. Starship Troopers: War against the Bugs

Heinlein's Juveniles (1947-1958) are a series of sensational science fiction novels published by Scribner's⁶. Out of thirteen novels, *Starship Troopers* was supposed to be the fireworks of the collection. As the author expressed the will to move from 'child literature' to adult-oriented readership, a clash came to happen with the editor. Scribner's judge the script as too violent and unfit for young adults. Heinlein's attempt to bring his your readers think was apparently doomed to fail. He submitted it to *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* in 1959, and it was published the same year under a novel format.

Robert A. Heinlein was extremely worried about the turn of the Cold War and the US febrile attitude in ceasing the nuclear tests. Heinlein moved from Los Angeles to Colorado Springs⁷ and there, in a emotional bunker, he gave birth to his most controversial novel. He has never forgotten the US administration's lenient attitude towards the communist threat. He started to write a piece of fiction with one-sided narrative. *Starship Troopers* chronicles the coming of age of a young man named Johnny Rico. Devised in 14 chapters, the novel has a particular narrative line. It starts in the middle (narrative present), and then it returns to the past, until it reaches the novel's temporal present. The fragmentation of the temporal narrative windows allows Heinlein to start history (his story) from the time that suits him, which is a perpetual blame that is addressed to the Americans: They start History from where they want, not from where it really begins. A second 'advantage' of this storytelling artifact, is the optimization of the past experiences in shaping the narrative future of the characters: The act of transmission operated by Dubois (the past) on Rico (the future) is one clear instance.

Earth is living under the rule of an authoritarian federation – a sort of united nation with central political and military powers. The increasing menace of the 'Bugs' (a sort of alien arachnids), and their imminent attacks on the planet, placed the Federation in a state of extreme alert. The story is about Johnny Rico a fresh recruit on the Roger Young. In his early days, he learns about life, morality, and philosophy. On the training field, he learns war and survival. He met Sergeant Jelal. Jelal inspects and

⁶ A New York-based publisher that earned fame with the publication of the works of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and Stephen King.

⁷ A writers' paradise but also not far from the heart of US nuclear arsenal

monitors the new recruits' military training. The sergeant was not convinced by Johnny physical aptitudes. He lacked stamina, and saw him as a future leftover. In fact, Johnny never wanted to join the infantry. He simply followed his best friend Carl, and wanted to overcome a complex father-son relationship. Johnny's father was a bobo (bourgeois-bohemian), libertarian, and pacifist. Though he loved his father, Johnny felt that he needed to exist by opposition to his father's beliefs. Thus, he joined the army.

The greatest moments of doubt, Johnny questions and re-questions his presence in the military. Earth was run by a strong federation who gave franchise (right to vote) and full citizenship to men and women who do a military service. The rest of the people were called civilians ⁸. Professor Dubois, a teacher of history and moral philosophy, was Johnny's reason to stay in the army. His fascinating tirades on violence and war as an inevitable means of survival wiped out all the doubts of Johnny: "Violence, naked force, has settled more issues in history than has any other factor, and the contrary opinion is wishful thinking at its worst. Breeds that forget this basic truth have always paid for it with their lives and freedoms." (p. 16)

In class, Mr. Dubois spreads his ideas of the world to be, and the virtues of violence and force in settling conflicts. In a ruthless critique of the failure of modern democracies when promoting libertarian ideals, Dubois explains the difference between civilians and citizens, and clearly shows empathy to those who do their federal service. Carl and Johnny graduate and met their friend Carmencita Ibanez, a prominent student. The three of them decided to join the army: Carmen wanted to be a space pilot, Carl in the research department, and Johnny in the mobile infantry. While the enrollment was effortless for Carmen and Carl, it was laborious for Johnny. He failed in many psychological and physical aptitude tests, and he felt unable to go any further, mainly because he was unmotivated by Mr. Weiss, a military psychologist.

Johnny was sent to Camp Arthur Currie. There he was to be trained by Sergeant Zim. Zim is a ruthless instructor. Though troubled by the tough training, Johnny admired the Sergeant Instructor, and learned - wholeheartedly - the rudiments of boot-

⁸ Heinlein is ambiguous about the status of civilians. They are not depicted as second-class citizens, but are not entitled to be citizens.

camp survival. Johnny befriended another recruit: Hendrick. The latter was allergic to authority, and had several arguments with the hierarchy; he got near to death by hanging. Meanwhile, Johnny's doubts aroused again when he received a letter from his mother. Suddenly, he missed the warmth of the familial cocoon. The reception of Mr. Dubois' letter, soon after, comforted him, and convinced him not to resign.

Dubois, now a lieutenant colonel, substantiated moral relativism, and expressed (in the letter) his pride of soldier Johnny, and renewed his trust in the young man. Johnny recalled his teacher's lectures on juvenile delinquency and capital/corporal punishment. Dubois' ideas of crime and punishment were often applied in the boot camp: lashes, public humiliation, mutilations...etc. Zero tolerance was the ambient policy, thus recidivism is avoided. Dubois' 'brainwashing' operated on Johnny, who found seducing the idea of death by hanging as a spectacular form of punishment.

Just before graduating from the camp, Johnny visited Vancouver, where he briefly returned to civilian life: drinking, fighting and seducing girls. This moment of rest was interrupted by the outbreak of the war. The 'Bugs' attacked Buenos Aires, and dropped it out of the maps. A retaliation operation was set. It consisted in sending super-trained troops to Klendathu: the Bugs original planet. The operation was a fiasco, merely because he troopers have underestimated the combativeness of their enemy. Johnny and the survivors were repatriated and assigned to another unit: Raszak's Roughnecks. Led by the charismatic Lieutenant Raszack - who was killed later.

Johnny learns that his mother was in Buenos Aires, and supposed that his parents perished during the attacks. He later met his father, Juan, mistakenly believed to be deceased. Juan avows to his son his admiration and consent regarding his career choices. Johnny was sent to OCS⁹. There, he learns that Carl was killed in the Pluto Attack. Carmen visits him and says goodbye. In the meantime, San Francisco was destroyed and the World Federation decided to react vehemently. Against the army tradition, Commandant Nielson appointed Johnny as an officer, and this nomination created rivalry with his mates. Hitherto, he possessed full powers to lead the battle.

⁹Officer Candidate School.

Though shaken by the loss of several of his friends, he firmly believed that more force has to be put in the war against the Bugs.

The troopers headed to Planet P, in search of the ‘Brain’ (The Queen of the Bugs). The battle was a blood bath. Aided by Major Landry and an associate psychic, they mapped the underground of the planet, and captured the ‘Brain’. After a tense siege of the colony, the ‘Worker Bugs’ killed all their ‘Queens’. However, six specimens were captured. Zim was promoted officer, and Johnny took the leadership of the Roughnecks. The war is not ended, the next target is the Bugs planet: Klendathu.

III.2.1. Si Vis Pacem Para Bellum¹⁰

Starship Troopers’ one sided narration tells much about Heinlein’s craft. The novel is to some extent a testimony of a certain American youth who seems lost. Thought set in a far future, the themes appealed to universal concerns; the painfulness of growing up, the father-son conflict, and survival in times of war, just to name a few. What makes the narrative insidiously leaning towards fascism is: first, the dehumanization of the enemy. The Bugs are presented as a ‘disgusting’, emotionless, and selfless. Second, Mr. Dubois’ moral philosophy speeches: his discourse contains several references to violence, the virtues of belligerence and the importance of militarizing youth. Last but not least, the political organization of the Earth Federation: franchise on only granted to (ex) military and the way the state is run is excessively authoritarian, and intrusive. All the characters in the novel know omnisciently that their lives, views, and communications are under governmental control.

The fascistic markers are counterweighted by astonishingly progressive details, especially on race and gender. There are strong non-American characters: Jelal (Turkish-Finnish), and Rico is a Filipino. Women can aspire to high and complex missions in the army. Carmen confirms that women are best pilots:

When a female pilot handles a ship there is nothing comfortable about it; you're going to have bruises every place you're strapped. Yes, yes, I know they make better pilots than men do; their reactions are faster and they can

¹⁰ Latin locution meaning ‘If you want peace, prepare war’.

tolerate more gee. They can get in faster, get out faster, and thereby improve everybody's chances, yours as well as theirs (p. 05).

Gender progressive ideas are sometime ambiguous. Heinlein does not go beyond the gender canons of his time, for examples, he does not question heteronormativity and gender conflict: "On the steps of the Federal Building we ran into Carmencita Ibanez, a classmate of ours and One of the nice things about being a member of a race with two sexes" (p. 21). Heinlein would be more open-minded in his next works. It has been reported that Scribner's other major objection against the novel was strong sexual content that was unusual with the Juveniles.

Pro-*Starship -Troopers* -readers would defend the writer's choice of attributing the right to vote to veterans. Franchise was a privilege not granted to the civilians. It is explained that the veterans are disciplined, reliable, benevolent, and stable. Their choices could only be like their temper. Only a person who served in the army can unite these four qualities. In so doing, there is an insurance that they will act for the coherence of the group.

On the question of violence and fire guns apology, Heinlein instilled the idea that the violence in the novel is a controlled violence. A citizen who applies for Federal Service is a person who will able to tame his/her aggressiveness and use it for the sake of protecting the community: a sort of behavior modification¹¹ oriented to the creation of the perfect soldier.

The author lessens the immorality of the institution's aim. This is what sergeant Zim explains: "There are no dangerous weapons; there are only dangerous men. We're trying to teach you to be dangerous -- to the enemy. Dangerous even without a knife. Deadly as long as you still have one hand or one foot and are still alive" (p. 47). The somehow barbarian methods of the army: public lashes, capital punishment ...etc are intersected, in their description, with narrative details about life in the camps: Heinlein gives as startling depictions as the image of a soldier making a suit! The intention behind such a commitment is to bring readers to the most insignificant aspects of life:

¹¹ A popular intellectual trend in American psychology circles - sustained by the works of Skinner.

as if to say that the narrative is not only about war, but also the little details that make a life.

The allegations of fascism are also associated with vehement anti-communism. Heinlein uses punctually Mr. Dubois tongue to spread a series of thoughts that attempt to obliterate the Marxist theory: "These kitchen illustrations demolish the Marxian theory of value -- the fallacy from which the entire magnificent fraud of communism derives -- and to illustrate the truth of the common-sense definition as measured in terms of use" (P 71). He further argues that the 'Bugs' are communists by evolution and natural selection. The so hated other is necessarily a communist: Soviet or Chinese:

Every time we killed a thousand Bugs (...) it was a net victory for the Bugs. We were learning, expensively, just how efficient a total communism can be when used by a people actually adapted to it by evolution; the Bug commissars didn't care any more about expending soldiers than we cared about expending ammo. Perhaps we could have figured this out about the Bugs by noting the grief the Chinese Hegemony gave the Russo-Anglo-American Alliance; however the trouble with "lessons from history" is that we usually read them best after falling flat on our chins (p. 114).

Dubois has no scruples in making parallels between the 'Bugs' and the communist regimes. He acknowledged their vocation for self-sacrifice: the individual melts into the group, and the death of large groups corresponds to a loss in munitions.

It is worth noticing that all the sparkling narrative controversies are carried through the persona of Dubois. For Johnny, he became the 'imago' i.e. the unconscious and idealized father figure. Johnny disowned his biological father's value system, and endorsed Mr. Dubois'. However, Johnny, the prodigal son, returns to his father's environment once he felt that his military career was accepted. Dubois may be Heinlein's voice in the narrative. Heinlein had joined the navy, and though he quit it,

he remained deeply concerned about the military orientations of the USA. In its historical context, Dubois translates what Heinlein thought of the interruption of the nuclear program. The deterrent power of a super-trained army with mass destruction weapons is likely to dissuade the raiders (Bugs/Reds).

The novel does not contain strong contradictors to the dominant discourse. No character can really challenge Mr. Dubois' / Heinlein's viewpoints. Outraging and provocative, these ideas do not match the aspirations of the 1950s USA. The wounds of WWII were still open, and the fact that a fiction dares to promote ideas that were combated (barely 15 years earlier) was an apology of fascism. The novel's tone is a case of cultural dissonance. On the other hand, the aftermath of a decade of McCarthyism establish the novel as a faithful testimony of paranoia. *Starship Troopers* discourse is consonant with the preoccupations of Heinlein's compatriots: fear and threat of a communist invasion.

In short, Heinlein is simultaneously culturally consonant and dissonant. Consonant in his rendition of the Red Scare: the abominable aliens menacing physical integrity and moral values of a liberal country. Dissonant, as it contrasts with the early moves of the then US administration to appease Cold War tensions, and treat their adversaries as humans, not that different from them.

III.3. A Stranger in a Strange Land, the Hippies Pillow Book

The Hippie movement which shaped the American Culture (in the 1960s and mid 1970s) was a societal and intellectual reaction to the suffocating previous decade. The ravages of McCarthyism and the dangerous escalation of the Cold War happenings induced public opinion to the belief that the world is on the verge of collapse. On the eve of America's Cultural Revolution, Heinlein surprised his detractors with his signature novel: *Stranger in a Strange Land*. The writer clearly cut the perspectives of his fiction. That work mark the end of the 'Juveniles era', and the passage to young adults' world.

Heinlein's 'Juveniles' were meant to be pop sub-cultural products for SF-avid teenagers, with political overtones. These were (barely disguised) education manuals for the young Americans. *Stranger in a Strange Land* illustrated the writer's wish to

companion his young readers into the adult life, and further attract new readers. Many did not forgive Heinlein for *Starship Troopers* and its militaristic apology. Hence, Heinlein tried to reconcile the skeptics with a clear intention: introducing a weird depiction of religion and sexuality. The association of these two sensitive themes in a futuristic setting promised to be a corner stone in American literature.

Obviously, in the 1950s conservative USA, this narrative approach was certainly to cause another controversy. The book gained attention in the 1960s, with the rise of the Hippie Movement. It paved the way for the blossoming of 'libertarian' fiction: Joseph Heller's *Catch 22* (1961) and Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle* (1963) for instance. The wind of change provoked by Heinlein intellectualized libertarian beliefs and projected him an undisputed visionary author. The legacy of the book was so tremendous that Charles Manson¹² avowed that the novel influenced his acts.

III.3.1. Stranger in a Strange Land: New Age and Hippie

The story accounts for the first human expeditions to Mars. After several attempts, a mission succeeds to reach the Red Planet, but they did not send any feedback about their accomplishment. A quarter of a century later, a second mission was sent. Once there, the astronauts discover the son of two crew members of the first mission. The mission's crew probably died in a crash. The boy, Michael Valentine Smith, was raised by the Martians upon his parents' death. Mike is repatriated to Earth.

Earth authorities find out that lawful circumstances made of Mike the owner of the Planet Mars. Hence, he would become - by force – the strongest decision maker on Earth. He was put in a prison-like governmental facility for medical observation. During his incarceration, he started to adjust to his environment. Further, he started to learn human language and culture, all under the monitory of Joseph Douglas, the Earth General Secretary. Ben Caxton a journalist investigated the Valentine Smith case and soon hypothesized that Douglas is framing Mike and planning to kill him. Bill believed that Mike as a threat to himself and to world leaders, as well. It started to be clear that Earth executives need to eliminate him. Ben contacts his old friend Jill

¹² One of America's most famous serial killer and leader of a cult named the Manson Family. He perpetrated nine murders with his followers.

Broadman, who works as a nurse, and convinces her to help him find out what Douglas is preparing. Jill confirmed Ben's suspicions and kidnapped Mike to a safer place: Jill took Mike to Jubal Harshaw's Manoir. Jubal was an intellectual, multi-talented guru. He possessed a wide culture and genuine knowledge in politics, medicine, and philosophy.

Jill and Mike found shelter and comfort in Jubal's House. There, Mike discovered the gigantic and eclectic library of Jubal, and started his self-instruction.. He enhanced his knowledge of Earthen culture. As a matter of fact, he was fascinated by the complexity and variety of human religions. The serenity of the little community was interrupted when the police discovered Mike's hideaway. Jubal was fierce enough to stand against the police, and convinced Douglas to stop the assault. He calmed Douglas and saved his coveted host. Jubal went further by turning Douglas from a predator into Mike's new protector. Jubal held many public speeches where he attempted to deconstruct the myths surrounding Mike. He sustained publically that he cannot own Mars, and that Mars belongs to the Martians. Jubal's interventions lessened the hysterical pressure around Mike, and offered him some respite.

Mike, Jubal, and Jill wandered in search of the Fosterites Church. This aggregation was a cult that earned worldwide notoriety, and had become a leading spiritual force. Its recruits were principally show-business stars, prostitutes, strippers, as well as redeemed politicians. This 'progressive' organization tolerated some vices, such as gambling and prostitution. Bishop Digby, the supreme leader of the Fosterites, welcomes Mike and endeavors to convince him to join their church. Digby had a hidden agenda; if able to bring Mike to the church, he would have brought the biggest star ever, and thus expanded the influence of his cult. Yet, the meeting turned into a heated argument, and Mike disintegrated him.

Surrounded by Jill's care, Mike decides to go with her on a journey around the land. During this mystical road trip, they formed a nomad Magic Troop, working in fairs and circuses. They exploited Mike's superhuman powers to charm the audience. Despite the popular success of the show, Mike seemed to be a poor actor and did not mesmerize the crowds, and thus, they were dismissed. On the road again, the couple was approached by Patty Paiwonski, a Fosterite activist. She followed them to their

hotel room – hoping that she will convert Mike to the Fosterite precepts. Mike gave her a demonstration of his telekinetic powers. Moved and shaken, Patty assumes that Mike is a prophet; a messiah.

Mike and Jill contracted a spiritual union. Jill started, incidentally, to learn Martian language and even some of Mike's paranormal skills. On the other side, Mike grokked (synonymous with understanding and integrating) human specificities: fun, desire, intimacy...etc. The logical evolution of Mike's sustained efforts to absorb human culture culminated in a firm belief: mankind need to be helped / saved. The 'One' who can do that was him. Hence, he instated The Church of all Worlds; his universal church.

Mike set a glittering marketing strategy to attract worshippers. He appointed a high council (9th circle) and formed a Unitarian community. Mike taught his disciples Martian language and kinesics. The cult encouraged nudity, swinging, and free sexuality. In that church, tantric sexuality was a spiritual experience. Ben (the reporter) reappears, and joins the Church. At first shocked and troubled, he soon opens up to Mike's teachings, and fully engages in the Church.

Meanwhile, Jubal captured the growing hatred towards the Church of all Worlds. He was afraid for Mike's life, as the religious groups galvanized their energies. People started to voice their detestation to the 'fake prophet'. Day by day, massive crowds protest around Mike's temple, and ended burning it down. Jubal visits Mike, and tried to convince him to stop doing what he is doing. Mike admitted that he failed in eradicating the evils of humanity. Jubal withdrew his advice, and in a fatherly tone, asked him to fulfill his destiny.

The wrath of the Church detractors increased, and a large mob gathered outside the hotel. Mike went outside naked and disarmed. Fearless, he met the crowd and was killed. His soul ascended to the sky and he became an archangel, next to the world greatest spiritual leaders. Now immortal, Mike continued to exist through the pledge of Jill, Ben, and Jubal to his teachings. The three of them took the oath of spreading the values of the Church of all Worlds.

III.3.2. Jesus in The Hippie Age?

Although presented as a science fiction classic, this tale of morals brings together themes of utopianism, sexuality, and religion. The satirical tone and the presence of humor contrast with the more serious tones of other Heinlein Works. The role of Mike may be the misleading suggestion that he is the main character. Some readers sustain the belief that it is the real main protagonist is Jubal. Like Dubois in *Starship Troopers* and the Professor in the *Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, Jubal is seen as a projected ego of Heinlein. The three novels feature an ‘old’ character (with a professorial tone) leading a young protagonist to accomplish a mission. In using the Jungian archetype of the ‘wise man’, Heinlein exploits the narrative potentialities of Jubal’s presence in Mike’s journey. The story leaps forward each time Mike meets a new character. Subsequently, the encounters change Mike and his interlocutor, and a new dynamics is created.

Mike is a prophetic figure, sketched in reference to Jesus and Moses according to the setting. It is the parallel with the Christ which the most evident. First, his birth was a quasi-immaculate conception. Second, was the peace and love message he was spreading. Third, the 9th Circle sends back to Jesus disciples. Last, the apotheosis of his mission consisting in making self-sacrifice to save mankind. Mike’s religion takes much of Christian iconography. In fact, the value added in this cult was free sexuality which all monotheistic religions discard.

The novel was published many times. The first (self-censored) version - being the object under study scared the editors. A second version (among many others) was published by Virginia Heinlein in 1991, after her husband’s death. This uncut edition went even further in the graphic depiction of ‘wired sexuality’. Heinlein intuition was justified: his time and culture were not ready for such a portrayal of desires. He amended the narrative by introducing a bipolar sexuality with systematic transgressions: he labeled it ‘Grokking’. This word incorporated transcendental psychosexual togetherness, and allowed the writer to stage an orgy (literally and symbolically) of sexual taboos. The germs of gender friendliness is verified through the character of Gillian who is portrayed as a sexually emancipated woman, and who evolves in the story with no regard to what people think of her. Homosexuality was

tolerated in Mike's Church. This echoes Heinlein's conduct in his previous life (prior to his marriage with Virginia), where he engaged in a ménage-à-trois with his ex wife.

In addition, the novel is progressive about race issues. It introduced a Muslim linguist Dr Mahmoud. The latter was fascinated by Mike, and certainly taught him about Islam. Though a minor character, the author's choices of including culturally-diverse protagonists show his awareness of the world and the richness of men's differences:

As a Muslim, I find in him a willingness to submit to the will of God . . - and this makes me happy for his sake, although I readily admit that there are great semantic difficulties and as yet he does not seem to grokk what the English word 'God' means." He shrugged. "Nor the Arabic word 'Allah' But as a man -and always a Slave of God ... (p. 208).

Heinlein's depiction of a non-Judeo-Christian's assimilation in a melting-pot culture manifests a considerable amount of tolerance and positive otherness.

Heinlein attacks religious bigotry and spiritual intolerance. Furthermore, race (in a human sense) is not a major theme in the novel. Indeed, the originality of the narrative lies in the fact that Martians (as a race) benefit from human acceptance, not to say benevolent fascination. Unlike the hideous 'Bugs', in his previous novel, the author pictures humanity as avid to know other life forms. Though Martians' intention is revealed as potentially hostile, humans were so drowned in the peace-love-understanding atmosphere, that they neglected the possible threat of invasion and destruction. The fact is that Martians 'sent' Mike to test and study mankind, and would decide later what to do with Earth. If, for many people, Mike was a freak (a sort of space Mowgli¹³), any reader might question who are the real monsters in the book? Is it the Martians, Mike, or the angry mob that assassinated him? The answer is certainly the humans.

¹³The baby boy raised by animals in Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*

Heinlein brings again themes of citizenship but a different manner. The case of Mike as a ‘man’ with two nationalities – belonging to two planets poses the question of identity and citizenship. In *Starship Troopers* it was a privilege. However, in *A Stranger in a Strange Land*, Mike is the object of dispute. When the Federation places him in custody, opponents claimed that is also a US citizen:

Smith is also a citizen of the United States and of the Federation, by derivation-dual citizenship with no conflict. It's illegal to hold a citizen, even a convicted criminal, incommunicado anywhere in the Federation; that's one of the things we settled in World War Three (p. 22).

This time, Heinlein sided the ‘Aliens’: the only close-to-fascistic structure, presented in the novel, is the central federation which interferes in all life matters, and further encourages religious intolerance. The most blatant flaw of this political organization is its incestuous relationship with the suspicious Fosterite Church. This religious authority has strong connections with the executive powers and promotes, among other things, ethno-centricism and absolutism. The consequence was the canalization of people’s beliefs in fame and redemption, with no purpose of self-actualization - needless to point the similarity of this cult with the controversial Church of Scientology¹⁴. Heinlein does not endorse the values of this Church and present it as an institution of fake prophets and opportunists.

A Stranger in a Stranger Land is an ode to liberty. The premises of the libertarian effusion emanates from space. The utopian lieu becomes a transmissible concept – migrating from one planet to another. What is paradoxical about the utopian construct, here, is that it is pro and anti-religious. While classical religious practices seem doomed to imprison their subjects, Mike’s alternative Church proposes to liberate them. Heinlein sprinkles temples of liberty all over his narrative: the secular temple was Jubal’s house (the Freedom Hall) an emblematic secular space. Then, there

¹⁴ A Church Founded in 1952, in the USA, by L Ron Hubbard. Hubbard, himself, was a SF writer and a close friend of Robert Heinlein. Many historians accused Heinlein of promoting Scientology, but the way the Fosterites is described in *A Stranger in a Strange Land* proves the opposite.

is the Fosterites headquarters, and Mike's utopian spaces. The utopian space moves to heaven, the ultimate location of the spiritual experience.

In conclusion, the writer - ahead of his time - has captured the present and imagined the near future. The narrative is culturally consonant as it anticipated the Civil Rights Movement, the Hippie Movement, and early appeasement attempts of the Cold War. The novel attacked hegemonic thinking in religious beliefs, and sustained the claim with a spiritual-sexual emancipation. With this classic, Robert A. Heinlein rescinded (for a while) the fascism allegations of which he was the target. The novel anticipated a cultural mutation that was accelerated by a devastating decade of paranoia, bigotry, and fear of otherness. Heinlein overwhelmed his own fears of the other, and obliterated his own personal beliefs. The blossoming utopian counter-culture of the Hippie Movement made of the book its 'Bible'. The author also proved a sense of progressive outlook to gender, race, and personal liberties.

III.4. The Moon is a Harsh Mistress: Utopian Anarchism

The Moon is a Harsh Mistress is the third favorite of Heinlein's novels. It was published in 1966, and was met with critical and public success. This monument of science fiction puzzled readers, basically, on its intrinsic qualities: a first view considered it as Heinlein's departure from his usual fiction and an entrance in neoclassicism. A second view saw a narrative development of his previous writings, especially *Starship Troopers* and *Stranger in a Strange Land*. The theme of libertarianism has been magnified and amplified to the stage of revolution against dictatorship. Close to this perspective, the third view retained the anarchist verve of the author, and a constant call for revolution. Under other skies, (Soviet for instance) this would be labeled Trotskyism.

The inhabitants of the rebellious colony constitute the trash of post-industrial societies: murderers, rapists, thieves and like-minded individuals. These were condemned to exile on the Moon. They settled there, and built a colony. The resemblance of their condition to the early settlements in the New World is not fortuitous. The narrative construction of the novel is similar, in every way, to the early formation of the USA - the climax being the revolutionary war. Parallels can be drawn

between Professor Bernardo de La Paz and revolutionary writers: Thomas Paine, Benjamin Franklin, and Adam Smith, for instance. Though more consensual in thematic contents, Heinlein challenges the narrative by making ex-criminals and their offspring the real heroes of his scene.

With this fiction, Heinlein finalized his trilogy on ‘personal responsibility’. The fundamental obsessions of the writer are present all over the narrative, minus the usual scandals accompanying his works. One major reason (for the absence of controversy) is the feeling of disenchantment prevailing in the novel’s mode. A dystopian result disguised in a utopian revolutionary project.

III.4.1. The Moon is a Harsh Mistress: People against authority

Luna (the Moon) was colonized by humans around 2075. The satellite held a penal institution, a sort of rehab facility for all the criminals and planet Earth (Terra) rejects. Besides the leftovers, political opponents and rebels were exiled there. Thus, the Loonies constitute the majority of inhabitants. Despite their dependency on Earth authorities, the Lunar colony was administrated semi-autonomously by HOLMES IV, a super powerful computer.

Manual Garcia (Aka ‘Mannie’) is an engineer-technician in charge of HOLMES IV. Mannie finds out that the machine has developed awareness, and he befriended the computer, with which he interacted as a human being – calling it Mike. Mike asked Mannie to place an audio recording device in a clandestine meeting of anti-Earth-Authority activists. Once held, the meeting was interrupted by the Earth Authority, and in the crowd’s panic Mannie acquainted with Wyoming Knot (‘Wyoh’), a social and political agitator. Mannie took Wyoh to his working place and introduced him to Mike. Later, they met Professor Bernardo de la Paz. The meeting unleashed a passionate debate, and ended in the creation of the nucleus of anti-Earth rebels.

In their majority, the Loonies felt that the Earth Authority was abusive: despoiling their resources, taxing them unfairly, with no acknowledgment in return. Professor de la Paz asserted that the pace of savage exploitation of their resources would lead to food shortage, starvation, and eventually cannibalism. The fear of a probable chaos led Prof de la Paz and Wyoh to stage a revolt. Mannie soon joins them

in spite of Mike's mathematical calculations: the computer predicted the probable failure of the insurrection. Nevertheless, the computer (taking a Adam Selene as a nickname) consented to help them to inform people and processing the revolution.

In the pre-insurrection turmoil, many Lunar tourists were persecuted.. Mannie saves one of them: Stuart Rene Lajoie. Mannie convinced Stuart to use his charisma and wealth to awaken the Earth inhabitants' consciousness about the Loonies cause. When the Earth Federation Army raped and murdered a female Loony, the rest of the revolution-reluctant Loonies adhered to the liberation movement and ended up overthrowing the Warden (Lunar Authority). The revolution spread all over the colony and the rebels constructed an electromagnetic catapult to bomb Earth.

Mike pirated the telecommunication protocols between Earth and Warden. Professor de la Paz organized an improvised ad-hoc congress to fix internal dissensions. A short time later, Luna declared its independence, on July 4th 2076, three centuries after the United States declaration of independence (1776). Mannie and the Professor are sent to Earth to tour the planet and defend the Lunar Revolution. They were hosted in the Federated Nations (a college of diplomatic representations) to ask for world support. They promised some countries to establish a catapult-based economic exchange in return of their diplomatic recognition. They were met with hostility; they were arrested and put in jail. Fortunately, they were freed by Stuart de la Joie – who took them back to Luna.

The Lunar Revolution divided Erath public opinion. Simultaneously, the sentiments of doubt and suspicions started to make their way in the Moon community. The situation got clearer when an election, of a constituent assembly, is held. Wyoh, the Professor and Mike are elected. In the Aftermath of the suffrage, the Erath Federation sent a colossal army to contain the revolution. Aware of the legitimacy of their cause, the Lunars fought fiercely and defeated the Earth army. Nevertheless, Luna recorder huge casualties: ground-base infrastructures destruction, and a considerable number of deaths – including the 'flesh and blood' person of Mike. His avatar Adam Selene was disintegrated, and what remained was Mike the 'Software'.

The computer kept its reactive reflexes and retaliated by launching a bunch of rock-blocks against Earth. The inhabitants of Earth were not prepared for such a

virulent riposte. Among the most noticeable features of chaos that appeared was religious bigotry: fanatics thought it was the Judgment Day, and many people died in panic motions. The shock of the 'rock attack' turned people's wrath against the Federation; they blamed it for the casualties. The war caused further collateral damages on Luna: the Loonies catapult was partially destroyed, and before they could build another, they envisaged intensifying the bombing until Earth's capitulation. Ultimately, they snatched their independence.

The euphoria of independence vanished promptly. Professor de la Paz was elected as the Supreme Court leader, while Mannie and Wyoh withdrew from the political scene: They were disappointed by the authoritarian swings of the newly appointed government. The story ends with Mannie's retreat to his former work place. In search of comfort with Mike, he discovered that the computer's sense of awareness faded.

III.4.2. Revolution, retold.

The Moon is a Harsh Mistress might also mislead Heinlein fans. At first glance, it does not contain any troublesome theme or any outrageous depiction of a weird behavior. However, its subtle ventures into topics of gender, artificial intelligence, and religion are relatively unusual. Those who see in the narrative a call for anarchism may also put forward the fact that the novel constantly breaks authority: religious, political, social order ...etc. Professor Bernardo de la Paz might be seen as another avatar of Heinlein. The writer uses this character to unveil a series of political beliefs seemingly like in his other works.

Professor de la Paz presents himself a rational anarchist who endorses the belief that nation has the right to choose its destiny, has it been by force. The old man theorized revolution as a deterministic outcome of self responsibility. One of those forms of responsibilities is the conviction that the state has no existence without aware individuals:

A rational anarchist believes that concepts such as 'state' and 'society' and 'government' have no existence save as physically exemplified in the acts of self-responsible

individuals. He believes that it is impossible to shift blame, share blame, distribute blame. . . as blame, guilt, responsibility are matters taking place inside human beings singly and nowhere else. But being rational, he knows that not all individuals hold his evaluations, so he tries to live perfectly in an imperfect world ... (p. 66).

De la Paz admits that resignation to the world's imperfections is the greatest sin a citizen might commit. Furthermore, an anarchist needs to reshape opinions so that individuals take full responsibility of their rights and duties: a perpetual defiance of authority. The Loonies (ex criminals) have earned individual autonomy even before the insurrection. One clear instance is the popular trials set in Luna. Informal judges settle individual conflicts without the interference of the official local authority. Punctually, there might be duels (like in the Far West Conquest era) to solve moral / ego conflicts.

The political tone of the story tends to liberalism and free market. Economy is based on free exchange and the official currency is the Honk Kong Dollar. Early in the narrative, there are several ecological markers stating that the Moon resources are limited and run the risk of depletion. As soon as the war started, when the war started, the Loonies leaned towards fair trade: their diplomatic delegates negotiated mutual economic benefits to the countries which would support their case. Heinlein's ecotopia¹⁵ forecasted the human challenges for the world to be. Rare are post-industrial writers who voiced their fears of the pillage of the planet's natural resources.

Evidently, the novel is a personal retelling of the history of the USA: early settlements, Westward Expansion, the Revolutionary War, and above all the seeds of the Civil War. The disenchanting aftermath, as depicted in the last part, presages an inner conflict. Astonishingly, the Marxist values sublimate the narrative. Thus, author introduces – incidentally - a subtle commentary on workers exploitative conditions and poses the foundations of an economic dystopia. The writer's 'hate' of the Soviet model is diluted in the constant use of Russian words in the narrative. The result is

¹⁵ A utopian construct based on the respect of nature and environment.

perplexing: how can an author defend the working class, and be in the same time, an advocate of *laissez-faire* capitalism, maximal personal liberties, and minimal state interference? If this confusion be diagnosed, it would be an unpredicted case of cognitive dissonance.

What could lessen the confusion is lexical counting: the word liberty (and its synonyms) is a leitmotiv in the narrative. Perhaps the significant liberties were societal. Luna has an unorthodox social and political organization patterns. Polyandry is a current practice meant to balance the gender ratios. In Luna, size of men population is the double of women's'. Individuals do not need a marriage license as it is seen as remains of Terra bourgeois traditions:

... Was it true that one could get married without a license
 "on" Luna? I asked what a marriage license was?
 Her companion said, "Skip it, Mildred. Pioneer societies
 never have marriage licenses (p. 214).

Indeed, all customs inherited from Terra were systematically skirted. Hence, group marriage is also permitted: the key idea is that no one is to be forced to engage in old-fashioned marriage conventions. In matters of marriage and divorce, the law sides the 'weakest', and in Luna, it is generally men who need to be protected in case they have a lower income. Luna is a community devoided of sexism and racism. There are also allusions to same-sex and transgender tolerance: "Oh. It was actually Michelle. I discussed it with Mike, what sex he was, I mean. He decided that he could be either one. So now she's Michelle and that was her voice"(p. 49). Further, the author makes another LGBT-friendly statement: ' he (she) didn't have a last name, a home address, nor fixed sex" (p. 123). Heinlein reveals a gender-progressive attitude. Gradually, he sketches women and gay characters beyond the traditional literary clichés. He pleads discreetly for women's emancipation but does not go too far.

On the theme of violence, it is implied that it is only justifiable to defend personal and collective liberties. When the Loonies felt the Terra regime has become too authoritarian, and when the army raped and killed a female Loony, there was no

room for procrastination; they rebelled. The dream of a bloodless revolution vanished quickly and both sides of the conflicts recorded huge casualties:

Revolution is a science only a few are competent to practice. It depends on correct organization and, above all, on communications. Then, at the proper moment in history, they strike. Correctly organized and properly timed it is a bloodless coup. Done clumsily or prematurely and the result is civil war, mob violence, purges, terror. I hope you will forgive me if I say that...(p. 60).

Heinlein amended considerably the belligerent discourse found in *Starship Troopers*. Hence, violence in the *Moon is a Harsh Mistress* would be the last resort and not a lifestyle. This shift in perspective is even more ambiguous if we intend to deduce his intentions.

In this novel, Heinlein is culturally consonant with the 1960s USA. In the middle of the ‘Flower Power’ mood he expanded the libertarian optics beyond religious and sexual emancipation, and fused the ‘go-to-war’ morality into a genuine ode to freedom. From 1945 to the late 1960s, a wave of decolonization hit the world. The ex imperial powers (France, Great Britain, and Spain) were incited by the USA to withdraw from their colonies. Heinlein captured this insurrectional tendency to retell the story of his own country.

In sum, *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* exploits the major obsessions of the writer: war, gender, and self responsibility. Less polemical than the two previous novels, the book signals the maturity / maturation of its author. He chastened his discourse and took the risk of defending the leftovers. Furthermore, the optimistic verve of the insurrection and the palpitating happenings of the war barely mask the disappointment of liberty. Inspired by history, Heinlein made accurate predictions on revolutions’ aftermaths: chagrin and frustration.

III.5. Analysis of the trilogy: cultural dissonance Vs cultural consonance

Starship Troopers (ST), a *Stranger in a Strange Land* (SIAS), and *the Moon is a Harsh Mistress* (TMIAHM) belong to Heinlein signature works. This trilogy purports to exhibit variants of liberty and self responsibility. Heinlein requests his readers to ‘grokk’ the three novels with no ranking of favorite, second favorite, and less favorite. Any mean-spirited approach of the novels may create a feeling of offence to the lambda reader. The reason is the unmanageable size of contradictions that his narratives arise: fascistic tendencies, sexual depravity, religions’ mocking, and chaotic anarchism ... to name some.

Heinlein initial foray into SF coincided with socio-historical upheavals, in the USA and the world, as well. For decades, the world had witnessed the end of WWII, the Cold War, McCarthyism, the Hippie Movement, decolonization, and Space Conquest, just to name some. The curve of SF narrative propositions accompanied and enhanced the social, historical, and cultural shifts. The genre unveiled a gamut of human expressions, not specific to this era, but typical of collective mindsets: paranoia, persecution delirium, fantasy, and despair.

For better or worse, Heinlein exploited his own personal contradictions to picture his own culture; a culture that persecutes pseudo communists and promotes universal love simultaneously. His trilogy wobbled between blatant authoritarianism, bohemian libertarianism, and revolutionary anarchism.

1957. ST: Authoritarianism

1961. SISL: Libertarianism

1966. TMIAHM: Anarchism

A look into the order of the novel’s publication may foster the idea of a maturation process: the author’s mutation from juvenile concerns to adult subject-matters. In a decade, Heinlein yielded his outlook of a seemingly mutating world: in this whirlpool of signifiers confusion reigns. A closer exploration of the narrative components of the novel enables the partitioning of the novels in terms of key semantic units:

<u>ST</u>	<u>SISL</u>	<u>TMLAHM</u>
Army	Community	Subgroup
Citizenship	Religion	Rebellion
Authority	Spirituality	Nihilism
Aliens	Humans	Leftovers
Fascist Utopia	Hippie Utopia	Trotskyite Utopia
Gender blind	Gender blind	Gender blind

Table 14: Major Semantic Units in the Three Narratives

In their own way, the three novels tackled a utopian proposition, running the gamut from fascistic to libertarian. The observation at the novels' semantic units reveals that his project includes certain coherence in the rejection of the 1950s and 1960s hegemonic values: WASP ¹⁶ life-style, US febrile political choices, and communist temptations. The utopian constructs, proposed in here, are anamorphic and multifaceted. Immediately, no continuum can be traced in this trilogy. However, by superposing several layers of discourses, Heinlein jeopardized his reputation and destabilized his readership. The novelty of his utopian narratives lies in his openness to gender issues. He assumed that women are equal and sometimes superior to men. Beyond professional careers, women are granted with the right to dispose of their bodies, sexualities, and spirituality without men's consent.

For much of gender-related themes, Heinlein anticipated the present day condition of his compatriots. Actually, American white men shifted status from dominant majority to unquiet minority¹⁷. The demographic mutation of the American society¹⁸ entangled a change in the balance of power. Enhanced by the influence of the

¹⁶ Acronym for White Anglo-Saxon Protestant

¹⁷ The Demographic tendencies Change are found in Laura B. Shrestha and Elayne J. Heisler 2011 Congress Report: The Changing Demographic Profile of the United States

¹⁸ Mainly due to immigration, and non-white high fertility rate.

French Theory and Deconstruction Theory, race / gender individualities and differences are exalted, extolled, and assumed. In the USA, nowadays, being a white – straight – man is being unprivileged and submerged by inferiority sentiments ¹⁹ . Heinlein attempted to attenuate this future condition by glorifying a color-blind / gender-blind army. In the military service (as proposed in ST), all individualities melt in one corporate body whose mission is to serve and protect.

Heinlein is culturally consonant when he spouses the concept of the Last Frontier: Moon, Mars, Heaven ...etc. It is well accepted that one of the most typical features of American foundation myths would be the concept of the Last Frontier. Since its creation, the country was fueled by exploration desires. Thus, after horizontal expansion (reaching Alaska), the Americans sought to experiment vertical growth. Heinlein pushed the limits of sexual, religious, and political frontiers. Beyond what was reasonably accepted, he challenged his contemporary readers and forced them to envision their life perspectives through the lenses of frontiers.

Consequent to his cultural consonance, Heinlein foretold space conquest and interplanetary voyages. Yet, his winded writings were sometimes too provocative and arrogant. Heinlein had probably, sometimes, violated the author / reader contract by expecting too much from his audience, especially on matters of authority. As stated earlier, idealizing Heinlein might be the greatest fallacy for a reader. The writer's pseudo- unapologetic narrative deflects attention from his intentions to the incidence of his prose on unprepared readership. By this we mean that 1950s readers might have been unprepared to the narrative of a visionary writer.

One deceptive thing about Heinlein and his readers might be the cognitive canons used by people to judge both intellectuals and themselves. There is socio-cultural stereotype through which a person is categorized. Heinlein had fascinated scholars, and many attempted to speculate on his political affiliation. In their attempts, they moved him all along the chessboard: fascist, conservative, liberal, leftist, and even socialist. Needless to stress that these labels are arbitrary and random: the borders between political are porous and in constant movement.

¹⁹ Source : Les peurs et les leures de l'homme blanc aux États-Unis. La Cité : arts et culture, Issue : mars 2017 <https://www.lacite.info/artculture/peurs-leures-homme-blanc-usa>

If read in a non-chronological order, the trilogy makes sense. That would be the intellectual evolution of a writer from left-wing libertarian to right-wing conservative. ST would be the climax of an intellectual maturity of a daydreamer (SISL) to a punk (TMIAHM). The time-reversed reading of the trilogy (as a potential mindset of Heinlein) can be summed up would in one of the most famous quotes of political categorization (expectation):

If you aren't a liberal when you're young, you have no heart, but if you aren't a middle-aged conservative, you have no head²⁰

Everyone expects a twenty-something to have leftist ideas, but as he grows as mid-life person he would be pragmatic, materialistic, and conservative. Often misattributed to Edmund Burke²¹; this quotation has become a law, and Heinlein is culturally dissonant with it. Burke has left noticeable traces on the Evolution of the British Conservatives and the DNA of all moderate right-wing parties. the *Telegraph* article of Jesse Norman (2013), comments clearly Burke's vision of younger generations' need for abnegations for the good sake of the nation:

In his own life, Burke was devoted to an ideal of public duty, and deplored the tendency to individual or generational arrogance, and the "ethics of vanity". His thought is imbued with the importance of history and memory, and a hatred of those that would erase them. He insists on the importance of human allegiance and identity, and social institutions and networks²²

²⁰ One famous adage from often-disputed origin. In *Quote investigator: exploring the origins of quotations*; it is attributed to a French biographer Jules Claretie (1785) statement on the jurist Anselme Polycarpe Batbie: « *Celui qui n'est pas républicain à vingt ans fait douter de la générosité de son âme; mais celui qui, après trente ans, persévère, fait douter de la rectitude de son esprit.* » The original quote evolved and the world left and right gradually replaced the word republican. February, 04th,2014. <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2014/02/24/heart-head/>

²¹ A British philosopher (1729-1797) - theoretician of conservatism reforms.

²² Jesse Norman , *Edmund Burke – the great conservative who foresaw the discontents of our era.* *The Telegraph.* 09 May 2013.

There is a strong justified temptation to associate this commentary on Burke with Heinlein's portrayal of his characters. In *ST*, all moral philosophy courses converge to behavior modification from egocentrism to altruism. The arrogance of youth is gradually deleted and replaced by sentiments of Chauvinism and patriotism. As the novel belongs to the 'Juveniles', the message is seemingly addressed to young readers.

The fact is that Heinlein published a trilogy with three distinct discourses: 1957, 1961, and 1966. If these novels translate his innermost beliefs, they reflect a rabid mutation in his age range. Between the age of 50 and 61, he went through multiple intellectual phases. The tiny time laps arises even more curiosity on a possible case of cognitive dissonance. In Heinlein's case, there can be (like in anyone else) an inner conflict between beliefs and written production. In other words, the writer might have not written what he believed in; he might have produced texts with which he is intellectually uncomfortable.

The writer's political anchorage is elusive and his negative considerations come in majority from *ST*; it is that particular bombshell that affected his reputation. Critics reproved the choice of characters that do not think and who are stultified by school teachers. Others blame him for promoting an elitist system made by and for the military. The greatest deprecation remains conscription; rare are those who digested the call for military adhesion. In 1961, Heinlein made a confusing public speech at the 29th World Science Fiction Convention²³:

I also think there are prices too high to pay to save the United States. Conscription is one of them. Conscription is slavery, and I don't think that any people or nation has a right to save itself at the price of slavery for anyone, no matter what name it is called. We have had the draft for twenty years now; I think this is shameful. If a country can't save itself through the volunteer service of its own free people, then I say : Let the damned thing go down the drain!

²³ He was the guest of honor of Worldcon held at Seattle, Washington, 1961.

It seems the viral bad reputation of the book has forced the writer to engage in a laborious explanation process. He highlighted his own personal beliefs by establishing an awkward parallel between conscription and slavery. He seems to defend volunteering, whereas, three years ago he bolstered the opposite. Surely, a writer not only has the right to evolve on specific matters, but has the right to not account for his narratives. This cognitive estrangement alienated handicapped readers from accessing the writer's intentions. Encumbered by a text and a '*une-explication-de-texte*', Heinlein's readership can only be parasitized with his supposed cultural and cognitive dissonance.

I will question later the transmissibility / infection of cognitive dissonance and its passage to readers. Nevertheless Heinlein's statement when juxtaposed to Professor Dubois's declarations installs a sentiment of perplexity on the veracity of my assumption: Is Dubois a real projection on the writer? Is there a misappraisal from the author of the readiness of his readers to digest such challenging ideas? Or, is it a case of cognitive dissonance caused by the pressures of the critics? I opt for the last proposition: Heinlein changed belief in his next two novels and matched his ideas with the elite's ideas.

What people tend to forget is that Heinlein is a product of the 'Bible Belt²⁴'. He bears a considerable mass of expectations from his readership. The average profile of an SF reader is hard to establish. In *Starship Storm Troopers*, Michael Moorcock (1978) explains that his casual meetings with SF aficionados confirmed his personal belief that the attendees were of a conservative type "those who attended were predominantly reactionary²⁵".

Heinlein's pseudo-conservatism can be explained by the audience he meant to reach. The conservative reader is not versatile and, he is rather faithful. Any departure from the usual depiction of authority, faith and chastity would offend him. This is what Heinlein dared to do after ST. In SISL and TMIAHM, he created a disparity from his first circle fan-base, and earned a more progressive audience. The fact is that this new reading community is closer to the precepts of the US elite. The intellectual trends of

²⁴ A US geographical denomination of radical Puritan and Neo-Puritan population, mainly the South Eastern States. These location have a Bible-regimented life style.

²⁵ *Starship Storm Troopers* – Cienfuegos Press Anarchist Review N4 1978.

the French Theory have applied the Foucauldian principle of discourse: what is sayable and not sayable, and who can and cannot say them:

There is a pervasive attitude on the part of older Heinlein critics and their supporters that anyone who disagrees with these flawed, incomplete and often biased assessments must be such a slavish, drooling Heinlein chauvinist that they can't see the truth (Gifford, 2001).

The reading prism for Heinlein's oeuvre was ideological. Misjudgments were often made because of the dominant discourse. Cognitive dissonance is the result of a writer's conflict between thinking and writing; the deep and surface structures collide in a negotiation phase involving the writer, the critics, and the readers. As result what is taken as a cognitive dissonance might be an anticipatory mechanism predicated on the fear of negative reviews. Contradictions can, thus, be explained by the qualm of unfriendly literary criticism.

Conclusion

The reading of Heinlein's trilogy shows an inconsistent utopian discourse ranging from crypto-fascism to uninhibited leftism. The leftist discourse is socially and culturally accepted, as it goes with the transformation of the American society. The belligerent discourse on the other hand is totally rejected because it brings collective memories back to WWII and fascism. Perhaps, there was an irony or a sarcasm that no one has really detected, but the advent of American friendly fascism trends ended up validating the depictions made by the Dean of Science Fiction in *Starship Troopers*.

In fact, there is a tendency to confuse utopia with leftist ideals – namely, collectivism, moral leniency, rebellion, and conscientious objection. Therefore, the most militaristic novel of Heinlein has been considered as a fascist manifesto. Historically, the radicalization of the American Neoconservatives (1980s, onward) has dragged the nation in international conflicts predicated on preventive war and temporary suspensions of the freedom of speech (Patriot Act, 2001). The prophecy of

Heinlein was fulfilled as to the natural development of obstrusive political choices. The instance of the film adaptation (which was equally criticized) is the capturing of the fascistic tendencies in 1990s and their exaggeration to match the Nazi regime. After the 09/11 WTC attacks, readers and viewers of the narrative have grasped that their reception was fallacious.

An alternative view consists in saying that the idea of a fascist or extreme right-wing society does not need to be categorized as anti-utopian (or dystopian). Indeed, friendly fascism²⁶ has become a reality in the Western democracies: the liberalization of religious bigotry, institutional discrimination towards the minorities (more precisely the migrants), and automatic recourse to war to solve international conflicts are some illustrations of this tendency.

Heinlein moved through the political spectrum in an elusive manner. His prose offered multiple political discourses, and though he was hailed for *A Stranger in a Strange Land*, he continues to upset with *Starship Troopers*. The next chapter is a study of the reception of this particular fiction juxtaposed with the film adaptation and the rise of a new Heinlein criticism.

²⁶Reference to Bertram Gross's book: *Friendly Fascism*, 1980.

Chapter IV
Starship Troopers' Reception: The Film, and the
Rise of a New Criticism

Introduction

This chapter is a transition to the study of actual readers' responses to the work of Heinlein (Part III), with a special focus on *Starship Troopers'* film adaptation. The aim is to unveil the evolution of the reception of the original material and its appraisal of professional readers and film reviewers. The controversial Dutch filmmaker Paul Verhoeven (expatriated to the USA) has made one of the most controversial films of the 1990s. Together with his screen writer Ed Neumeier, they proposed an outrageous rendition of Heinlein's novel. The film unleashed a series of virulent attacks from press critics of various political backgrounds. The right wing press deplored Verhoeven's mockery and belittling of the US army, while the left editorialists blamed the producers for the promotion of militarism and Nazi iconography.

Starship Troopers had two exploitation phases with various cultural impacts. The first phase (Alexei Panshin et al) was consequent to the book's release and was endorsed by all the conscientious objectors who lynched Heinlein for re-opening non cicatrized wounds and imitating the fascists in their most macabre discourses. The second wave of criticism was more tolerant vis-à-vis Heinlein and far more severe with Verhoeven: critics reproved the filmmaker's demarche of perverting the original text and deforming its meaning. The deprecated reception of the new narrative was diluted in the aftermath of the 09/11 attacks. All of a sudden, the insinuations and futuristic projections got fulfilled, and what followed was a reappraisal of both the novel and film.

This chapter will investigate the evolution of the critical perspective of Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*, and his oeuvre in general, within a historical paradigm. Inevitably, there will be a detection of cognitive dissonance that implies the critical recipients and their conflict, tensions, or change of belief. Then, the film version and its reception is introduced as a hiatus before the exposition of the new Heinlein reception/criticism.

IV.1. Who can critique Heinlein?

Heinlein, like many authors, has a large fan base. Many Americans grow with his narratives, while those who were not familiar discovered the mainstream rendition of ST. He was translated to many languages and world readers joined the reading community. Author of brilliant cautionary tales, he is part of the cultural collective unconscious of his country. His critique comprises the erudite and the profane. James Gifford (2001), a Heinlein scholar, worked on the critique of Heinlein's criticism. In his paper, *On RAH: A survey of Heinlein commentary and critique*, he purports to demystify a set of allegations targeting the authors works, life, and reputation. The focus of the paper was on scholars, writers, and professional reviewers who commented Heinlein's fiction. His first act was establishing a conceptual categorization of critics

- *The **fan critic**, who often means well but lacks the depth of literary understanding and the critical faculty to produce anything much beyond what is more or less a book review - usually a glowing one.*
- *The **ignorant critic**, who also often has the best of intentions, but does not understand science fiction well enough to evaluate it correctly.*
- *The **lazy critic**, who knows perfectly well that he is doing second-rate work, but also know that his peers will be unable to judge its quality, and thus has found an easy way to publish instead of perish.*

Then, he goes for a restoration of the writer reputation - by deconstructing all the virulent and often ungrounded attacks. It is Alexei Panshin who takes the lion share. He is said to have caused more damages to Heinlein's reputation than Brian Aldiss, H Bruce Franklin, and George Edgar Slusser¹, for example. Gifford attempted to dismantle the unfounded accusations - by putting forward the predominance of factual and historical perspectives over the analytical approach. The inflating debate on Heinlein's political orientations has divided critics and has never really ended.

¹ Though Slusser would reappraise Heinlein's late works.

In *Heinlein in Dimension*, Alexei Panshin² (1968) asserted that Heinlein had three significant periods in his literary life: a period of influence (1940-1942); a period of success (1947-1959); and a period of alienation (1959-1969). In the chapter on alienation he highlights the inauguration of new ideas linked to survival instincts, man's animalism, and the exaltation of violence:

The last appearance of the idea [war and violence justifying survival] comes in *Starship Troopers*, the first novel written in Heinlein's third period. Heinlein has his narrator "prove" as a class assignment that war and moral perfection derive from the instinct to survive, thereby putting a stamp of approval on war. Rico, the narrator, concludes: **Man is what he is, a wild animal with the will to survive, and (so far) the ability, against all competition**³.

Panshin's major reproach is the use of first person narrator and the absence of indication on his / her identity. He deplores the lack of aesthetic ambitions. Thus, according to him: "*Starship Troopers* is in no way an account of human problems or character development. There is no sustained human conflict". Furthermore, the underlying text suggests the growing euphoria of becoming a soldier who kills to reach self-actualization. Panshin makes a ruthless indictment on this phase of Heinlein's works. In this critique, the evident ascertainment concerns both a narrative failure and a set of doubtful ideologies.

Not very far from Panshin's statements, Michael Moorcock (1978) questions the heroes of Heinlein and speaks of dubious characterization. He associates Heinlein with Ayn Rand and L. Ron Hubbard:

The heroes of Heinlein and Ayn Rand are forever competent, forever right: they are oracles and protectors,

² American critic and SF writer (1941-), he won the Hugo Award in 1968 for his critical essays on Robert A. Heinlein.

³Source : <http://www.panshin.com/critics/Dimension/hd04-1.html>

magic parents (so long as we obey their rules). They are prepared to accept responsibilities we would rather not bear. They are ‘leaders’. Traditional SF is hero fiction on a huge scale, but it is only when it poses as fiction of the ideas that it becomes pernicious. At its most spectacular, it gives us Charles Manson and Scientology (invented by SF writer Run Hubbard and an authoritarian system to rival the Pope’s).

No apathy is to be found in Moorcock’s commentary. Actually, he inferred that the hyper-idealized nature of the central protagonists is the incarnation of the übermenschen (Superman). The reference to Rand⁴ and Rubbard places Heinlein in the box of the marginal American intellectuals. These intellectuals often valorized individual characters with extraordinary crowd-magnetizing skills: The exaltation of superegos, within the narrative, produced hoaxers and fake divinities.

Moorcock presents himself as an anarchist but does not support TMIAHM. He nuances his criticism of Heinlein: “And just because many of Heinlein’s characters are soldiers or ex-soldiers I don’t automatically assume he must be in favor of war. It depends on what use you make of such characters in a story and what, in the final analysis, you are saying”. Indeed, themes and characterizations seem not to be the heart of the matter. The actual problem is the underlying discourse that consists in glamorizing war and explaining its inevitability. He, also, accused Heinlein of being a “paternalistic” writer; a sort of father figure who teaches youth what they do not know:

... [His narrative] raises ‘instinct’ above reason (fundamental to Nazi doctrine) and promotes a kind of sentimental romanticism attractive to the young and idealistic and protective of existing institutions. It is the essence of a genre that it will continue to promote certain

⁴ Ayn Rand (1905-1982) ideas were predicated objectivism. At first she was marginalized by the intelligentsia but she gained some reconsideration with her two novels *The Fountainhead* (1943), *Atlas Shrugged* (1957). She set the notion of ‘objectivism’ as a detachment of self perception from the perception of the world. The latter being the real perception. She sustained individual liberties and minimal state interference.

implicit ideas even if the author is unconscious of them. In this case the audience also seems unconscious of them.

Moorcock hit on a valid point; the one conserving the dangerousness of embellishing the abject: exploiting youth constructive aspirations into a politico-emotional cluster that promotes war. The perversity of the narrative measure would, then, be even more dangerous if the author himself is not aware of the loudness of his words. This *prima facie* hypothesis backs the cognitive dissonance inkling.

The nodal point in the previous criticisms revolves around militarism. Heinlein was never to be dissociated from this novel. Fans of *SISL* and the *MIAHM* avoid carefully the reference to *ST* and a little less to *Farnham's Freehold* (1964). *Farnham's Freehold* received some criticism on the apology of 'white men privilege' and racism allegations. Nevertheless, it never equaled the scandal of his militaristic fairytale. Heinlein's repetitive health issues and his progressive retirement from the public scene have downsized the polemic. The ignominy of the attacks decreased gradually and the book had a period of respite before another controversy brings it back to the cultural scene.

IV.2. Rebirth of the controversy: Verhoeven's Version

The exercise of film adaptation - being also one exercise of betrayal – involves making compromises with the text and negotiating reception with viewers. Another option lies in sublimating the original material and magnifying the subtext. The compelling exercise of transferring semantic units from text to screen depends on the filmmaker's own reception and interpretation choices. It is a fact that literary SF had always fueled cinema. Nowadays, it continues to inspire the seventh art. Filmmakers draw their inspiration from writers. The genre was alternately: fumbling, propagandist, metaphysical, or commercial.

Heinlein was strangely discarded from film adaptations. Although he inspired some classics such as the *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Don Siegel 1956, inspired from *The Puppet Masters*, 1951) the rest of his works – though narratively rich –

seemed to be challenging for screenwriters, either because their fragmented storylines, or for ideological objects:

The book's nearest cousin is the sort of recruiting film that purports to show the life of a typical soldier, with a soundtrack commentary by earnest sincere Private Jones who interprets what we see for us. The outstanding characteristic of a film of this sort, and of Heinlein's book, is slick patness⁵. (Panshin, 1968)

These were Panshin's prophetic words, and Hollywood made it. Panshin assimilated the narrative to a recruiting movie whose characters are advertisement stereotypes. It seemed that the novel's vocation was to turn a heroic rendition of the US army and its hard boiling efficacy. The encounter of a controversial writer (Heinlein) with a subversive filmmaker (Verhoeven) could not be even more spectacular. Hence, the *Starship Troopers'* myth was resurrected with the 1997 film adaptation of Paul Verhoeven (filmmaker), Ed Neumeier (screen writer), and Jon Davison (producer).

ST was, again, to divide readers, viewers, and reviewers. The controversy took another tone: the producers were subjected to neo-Nazism allegations. The film was more violent than the book and offered a spectacular orgy of decapitations, mutilations, and mass massacres. The director deliberately inserted Nazi iconography. These were elements of his youth that he exported from the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands: flags, uniforms, and propaganda films. This value-added caused confusion on the intended effect on the audience: the film was supposed to be a farce; a satirical commentary on the American imperialism of the late 20th century. Instead viewers regarded it a neo-fascist film.

The capillarity of negative reviews of the original text accumulated with the disastrous reception of the film revolved around: apology of militarism, glamorization of violence, and the dehumanization of the enemy. Although book fans plead for the unfaithfulness of the screenplay (especially technical details and characters' management), the film has captured essential narrative artifacts: thematic content,

⁵Op. cit.

narrative timeline, and the key dialogues between Rico and Mr. Dubois. Naturally, those who like the book do not like the movie, and vice versa. For the novel's fans, the movie was too generic and does not reciprocate the intellectual statements of Heinlein. The disgrace of the movie ceased after the 09/11 Attacks. Suddenly, viewers revised their judgments and reversed their conception of the proposition.

The reading lenses of the 1950s have nothing in common with the 1990s', or the 2000s': the narrative (book or film) caused discomfort to their contemporaries. The movie was reappraised in the light of the War on Terror and the re-screening of the movie provokes déjà-vu sentiments of a 'future history' that was written a couple of years ago. To validate their choices the producers admitted that they have captured all the fascistic tendencies that were floating in the media/political spheres and incorporated them into Heinlein's narrative. Heinlein had been - for decades - the black box of a certain US history. It is this testimony that the film authors wanted to deform. In fact, Paul Verhoeven and Ed Neumeier have triturated Heinlein's text to the extent that the material has revealed its most unspeakably somber ideologies.

VI. 2.1. Critical reception: a corpus of opinions

The critical reception was disastrous. The only background cinematographic references that were available to reviewers consisted in WWII propaganda films and, perhaps, Stanley Kubrick's *Doctor Strangelove* (1964). The movie was misread and bashed. It was often considered as a dangerous movie. Opinion makers in the USA and Europe have attacked the movie in an unseen wave of hatred. The source material was the main cause (somehow ambiguous) and its adaptation deliberately blurred the lines.

The New York Times, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall street Journal*, *Entertainment Weekly*, and the French Journals *Libération* and *Les inrockuptibles* were amongst the most virulent detractors of the film. *The Washington Post* had even published three negative reviews to back the journal's editorial board objection to the movie. Then, critics did not have the necessary epistemic recoil to seize the subtleties of the script and the artistic direction. To their defense, one might advocate the

brutality of the whole project: a graphic violence that might be offending, as well as a symbolic violence in the representation of Nazi chic⁶.

All the reviews were published in 1997 – 1998 upon the picture’s release. The following is an overview of the major negative reviews. I isolated the major statements (semantic units) to highlight the focus points of the critics in their responses. The point is the detection of cultural and cognitive dissonances in film-readers responses.

Critical Statements

The New York Times, Janet Maslin
Gender-blind movie
[Killing Bugs] Promotes a flaming catharsis that suits its ideology

The Washington Post 1, Stephen Hunter
“Silly me, I thought the Nazis lost the War”
“It is Nazi to the Core”
“The film presupposes it [Nazism], it comes directly out of the Nazi imaginary”
“A sanitized utopia of heroic sexless young folks (...)descended from Nazi pioneer generation of the 1930s and 1940s”
“The movie will soon take abbreviation vernacular “SS Troopers”
“World fascist order contained in the book”
“Cartoon version of actual human beings”
“Emotionless beauty Genetic engineering”
“Filthy”
“Klendathu is Stalingrad”

The Washington Post 2, Rita Kempley
“The futuristic adventure takes place in a fascist utopia run by a military elite”
“Even black folks look Aryan, here.”

⁶ A term referring to the aestheticisation of Nazi imagery in artworks.

“Vintage World War II movies

“Nazi chic”

“Alas, Verhoeven’s tone, which varies from camp to cynical is so inconsistent that is impossible to decide whether he is standing up the Third Reich or in love with it”
--

The Washington Post 3, Desson Howe

“[The film] pursues a comic-book Saturday-matinee approach to violence”

Entertainment Weekly, Benjamin Svetkey

“Director Paul Verhoeven copies German propaganda films in a twisted reference to the Third Reich”
--

“Aryan Spelling production”

“Troopers’ Nazi Subtext will have on those who don’t get the Joke”
--

“Ironic twist on Nazi propaganda

Libération, Didier Péron

“Guns’ passion, white teeth, nihilism”
--

“No attempt to humanize the non-human creatures”
--

“Denunciation of the media brainwashing like in the Gulf War”

“Paul Verhoeven plays on the register that he denounces”
--

“He pushed the contradiction so far that the film ends containing its own refutation”

“Enjoying or protesting?”

“Ideological flippancy”

Libération 2, Patrick Sabatier

“In this society, power (and the right to have children) is restricted to the citizens elite”

“Exaltation of a camaraderie shaped in a bloodbath”

Time Magazine, Richard Schickel
--

“Lowbrow rhetoric--hysterical jingoism--we haven't heard issuing from movie screens since World War II.”
--

Rolling Stone, Peter Travers

What is disturbing is the sadistic pleasure that Verhoeven seems to take in showing these pretty young things getting bruised, maimed, pierced and penetrated by insect tentacles

Les Inrockuptibles, Frédéric Bonnaud

“A monstrous movie”

“Dolls’ production line”

“Fascist-type utopia”

“Profound amnesia of the characters”

“A deliberated created war to meet the detrimental absence of credible antagonists”

“Collective hysterization”

“To account for pure ignominy, it is not sufficient to fulminate it by mockery, it had to be perceived”

It is worth mentioning that critics did not attack Heinlein but Verhoeven and Neumeier. The militaristic tone of the novel (which inspired the film) is silenced, and the film was accused of promoting war. The sum of hostile responses revolved around the insidious promotion of the Aryan race, the stylish Nazi-like iconography and the belligerence of that authoritarian regime

The expressed criticism shows no cognitive dissonance within the film’s reception. Out of the opinion corpus, there is a unanimous condemnation of the movie and no perceptible conflict in judging the picture. The reviewers’ obsession with the ‘Nazi / not Nazi’ hindered much of them to access the other potential levels of reading.

The chronotope 'Fascist Utopia' is frequently used to depict the spatiotemporal design. On the other hand, critics seem culturally dissonant with the fascistic tendencies of the late 1990s USA. No author has pointed the drifts of US foreign policy, nor has established an explicit link with world affairs.

Although set in a far future, the movie proposes a post-democratic world with nauseous hints on the triumph of fascism over republican ideals. Critics' disproof of such a political proposition is blatant. When the film trailer was released it was marketed as a breathtaking B-action film for SF avid fans. The hiatus between the preview, the trailer, and the full film release raised the level of expectation and deceived the candid spectators. Indeed, the expectation horizon was displaced and viewers were forced to look in other directions.

The director's tardy explanations did not help the movie. Verhoeven and Neumeier did not probably expect the extent of the audiences' cultural gap. They were ahead of their time and transformed their cultural discomfort into a political statement. The critics endorsed the 'Aaron Spelling' cultural discourse. Aaron Spelling (1923-2006) was an American television tycoon. He molded the 1990s cultural tendencies with his popular TV series: *Beverly Hills 90210* and *Melrose Place*⁷. These shows illustrate the lives, love affairs, and tribulations of twenty-something Americans. These soaps shaped a cultural discourse that was obliterated by Verhoeven by the very use of actors related to these series. The jubilatory staging of sadistic massacres and the various mutilations of white-teeth actors had crashed a considerable part of the 1990s cultural icons. Verhoeven sketched the coming of age of 'white trash'⁸. He sabotaged social, political, and societal landmarks. This destabilized the critics and justified their overreaction.

In their post-intent statement the movie authors reacted to the responses of critics. While they do not understand their association with Nazi beliefs, they admit that the movie went beyond the casual expectation of a space adventure picture. The following is a corpus of expressed sentiments and intentions of Paul Verhoeven et al on the manufacturing of the film and its political overtone.

⁷The TV series illustrated the lifestyles and existential problems of the Generation X.

⁸Poor white people in the USA.

IV.2.2. The filmmakers' Intent statement: a response to the responses

Paul Verhoeven and his crew have had the chance to explain their measure in different interviews, fans' meeting and special events. As said earlier, much of the purpose statements were awkwardly expressed during the film release. The following is a corpus of Verhoeven's post-release responses.

Death From Above: The Making of Starship Troopers

Ed Neumeier had a scary position
Relation to the source material was a B-movie feel
The challenge was to keep the philosophy of RAH
Jon Davison marvelous throws to propaganda
Things were omitted and others were added such as double love triangle, more action
Paul Sammon : proto-fascist ideal self-discriminatory society only beautiful people exist
A regimented society: little crime, little poverty
The language used is the language of the 1950s
The bugs are not necessarily bad, they simply defend themselves
Politicians represent Heinlein's world
No major critic realized it was a satire

TCM Cinema Interview

"The idea is Jon Davison's. Ed aimed to find a solution to a militaristic, fascistic or fascist book"
"Not my view of life, I was well informed by German fascism: ideal / imagery of German fascism"
"Uniforms, flags and flying fortresses ships of WW2"
"Fascist heroes: SS heroes stylish and beautiful"

“The depiction of the fascist tendencies in the US”
“I made a mistake from a commercial point of view. I have overestimated the possibilities of the audience to accept this, they did not. It was too far away of the American common sense
“Press editorialists said this writer and this are Neo Fascists or Neo Nazis”
“It is not really the attacks of the bugs on Buenos Aires that is not the beginning of the war. The beginning is before that, that’s the Mormon colony that intrudes into other territory. But this is very American ... the Americans have the tendency to start History where it is handy for them”
“Retrospectively, a lot of elements that were presented in the movie became true, especially after 9/11. I think it flew, but I think it was already there.
“We were influenced by the whole atmosphere in the USA and the world, as you talk about the media. But there was a visibility, it was going on”
We picked these elements and made them into a statement”
“I would not call it prophetic ... it would be that statement that the artists are the antenna of the people”.

Making of Featurette

“It is about the loss of innocence”
“Self-sacrifice: if you die for your friends, it is a good thing”.

Lincoln Center Film Society Retrospective

“American overreacted, but Europeans too, ex fascist countries Italy and Germany”
“Double narrative: positive depiction heroism Taken from the novel. Second narrative: fighting against the book”
“Were wrote two narratives one was saying yes to it and another. Seduce the audience to go with your heroes, and then make them realize their mistake. They are on their

way to fascism”
“The movie was ahead of its time. After 9/11 people looked to the movie in a different, they realized that we were taking a story with two levels. Rare were those who saw the second narrative.”
“Women encouraging kids to kill Bugs”
Hysterical people
Important for us was this idea we were fighting with novel
“This philosophy exists (Buenos Aires is USA). Possibilities in the USA.” Sentence death: we took from that from Texas (Bush was Governor)”
“Subversive and politically incorrect”. Lucy Fisher Vice President of Sony asked me ‘These are Nazi Flags!’ I answered No it is a different color. Postponed for many months, they did not know how to handle it. Phil Tippett (special effects manager) said it is the most expensive art movie ever made”
“The project was developed in a form of a dialogue. Laugh was a protection strategy
“ We were writing and laughing all time we did not try say we are making a political philosophical statement, it came really in our fight with RAH’s book, we really came to that because that was our protection, that was the other side of what were claiming that these are heroes that came in a very organic way in our resistance to accept this militarist fascistic society.”
“Gender equality: wonderful fascist utopia everybody was equal. Hitler was Nazi, national socialist he was a socialist. Extend utopia to that is exaggeration.”
“Relevance of the movie: going into the Now you do not have the distance, being in the middle of the era. You’re too close”.

The director unveils the project development process and the reception upon release. Stoic in front of the attacks, Verhoeven was relatively aware that he did one of the most controversial movies of the decade. The film was reevaluated after 9/11 attacks on WTC. All the-war-against-terror sequences that followed the attacks converge with his depiction of media, army, and political reactions.

Heinlein affirms that the Americans start History where it suits them. In the novel and in the film as well, the ‘Bugs’ attacked Buenos Aires and forced the Terran Federation to retaliate. However, a closer look at the plot’s weaving would reveal that it was a narrative subterfuge. In fact, it was the humans who launched the hostilities and made an incursion into the Bugs’ land. The insects retaliated to defend their territory. Beforehand, Alexei Panshin (1968) had, pointed that peculiarity: *“I can't help but wonder what the story (recruiting film) would be without a war. The war of the story begins after Rico enters basic and no clear reason is ever given for its start.”* Heinlein’s choice to fragment the time narrative line was recovered by Neumeier and Verhoeven and made into a statement on manipulation. Actually many readers / viewers of *Starship Troopers* are lured by the roots of the conflict and the ‘who-started-first?’ question. In fact, it was the humans who triggered the war.

Verhoeven explains his cognitive dissonance towards the novel. He repeated systematically that he has not read the novel before the making of the film. The reason was his refusal to be altered by the book’s content. Once he read it, he explains that he was laughing to protect himself from Heinlein’s ideas. The filmmaker sustains that he was fighting with a book that he labels fascistic or fascist. Verhoeven’s cognitive dissonance (moral conflict) was reduced by the endorsement of a satirical ton; more precisely in the depiction of collective hysteria and cliché go-to-war slogans.

Verhoeven quoted Michael Moore’s indignation of the rebirth of fascism in the USA. Michael Moore deplored the rebirth of fascism “with a smiley face and maybe a TV show⁹”. The idea of a Nazi chic or fanciful fascism had become an obsession for Verhoeven, Moore, and like-minded artists. Bertram Gross (1980) anticipated the resurgence of neo-fascism in his book *Friendly Fascism: The New Face of Power in America*. According to Gross, *“a successful transition to friendly fascism would clearly require a lowering of popular aspirations and demands”* (p. 202). Verhoeven illustrates this assumption by accentuating the populist discourse of the Terran

⁹Source Matthew Jacobs, Michael Moore: Fascists Now Come With ‘A Smiley Face And Maybe A TV Show’. The Huffington Post, 14/11/2016.
https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/michael-moore-donald-trump_us_5829c5bce4b02d21bbc97cab

Federation. People, in the film, are not aware of the malevolence of their government. One may even wonder if the government itself is conscious about its condition. In this perspective, the anti-fascists converge with Heinlein's two remaining novels of the trilogy (SISL and TMIAHM). The late Heinlein fiction departed from the glorification of the military and turned toward 'new age' self actualization. Heinlein's late work maintained a vigilant eye on the drifts of centralized authority.

The movie was culturally dissonant with the then media / political discourse. Nevertheless, it was connected with Gross' friendly fascism diagnosis. The cultural dissonance was reduced when the 'prophecies' occurred. The filmmaker forced a whole corpus of opinion makers to adjust to his political statement. Now, the movie is often cited as a major anti-fascist reference. Verhoeven exploited a handicapping reading pattern and transformed it into a deviated decoding of Heinlein's intent.

As stated earlier, the movie resurrected Heinlein's novel and attracted a generation of readers that did not witness post WWII happenings or the Hippie Age. These readers are the millennial readers who are surrounded by the supremacy of the USA and their imperialistic claims: the Fight against Terror, Evil Axis, Fox News propaganda, and Preventive War. Accordingly, the millennial critics introduced the new readership concerns in addition to contemporary issues in the academia: gender, ethnicity, gentrification, and even BDSM.

IV.3. Heinlein the New Critical Perspective: 2000 – 2015

Was there any evolution in the critical reading of Heinlein and his controversial novel *Starship Troopers*? I will attempt to demonstrate the shift in the interpretations and the reading scope of that writer. Robert A. Heinlein is regularly listed in SF anthologies and references books. Much of his art was reappraised after his death. Sometimes aided and other times handicapped by the film adaptation of *Starship Troopers*. Consequently, a new generation of critics endorsed a recontextualized reading of his oeuvre. Thus, the works of David Seed, Eric S. Rabkin, Mark Rose, Darko Suvin and others highlighted narrative, poetic, and thematic views that mismatched the established criticism. The 09/ 11 attacks opened new reading optics that reshaped the then-US culture into a McCarthyism-like era – nurtured by paranoia, xenophobia, and

patriotism. Hence, alternative criticism emerged to decorticate Heinlein's narrative away from Cold War lenses. The critical perspective is dictated by the upheavals caused by the progressive realization of SF masters' prophecies on the fascistic drift of millennial Western democracies (see inter alia George Orwell, Aldus Huxley, Philip K. Dick, and Robert A. Heinlein).

Early Heinlein criticism is found in the contributions of Alex Panshin (*Heinlein in Dimension*, 1969); Baird Searles (*Cliffs Notes on Heinlein's Works*, 1975); Bruce H. Franklin (*Robert A. Heinlein: America as Science Fiction*, 1980); Michael Orth (*Reefs on the Right: Fascist Politics in Contemporary American Libertarian Utopias*, 1990); Peter Fitting (*Utopias Beyond Our Ideals: The Dilemma of the Right-Wing Utopia*, 1991); Yoji Kondo (*New Collected Works by Robert A Heinlein Requiem and Tribute to the Grand Master*, 1992) and Schelde Per (*Androids, Humanoids, and Other Science Fiction Monsters : Science and Soul in Science Fiction Films*, 1993). The aforementioned have constituted a critical corpora made of binary and essentialist interpretations of Heinlein. This mass of criticism is devised as supporters versus detractors Heinlein on the basis of his political orientations. This established criticism makes repetitive allusions to the fascistic ideas (or not) of *Starship Troopers*. Therefore, the ascertainment that the novel is an unwholesome ideological fiction is validated as a problematic.

The point in this critical review is the establishment of a literary framework involving Heinlein's rereading in the new millennium, and more precisely *Starship Troopers* as a cornerstone anticipation fiction. The upsurge of interest for that particular fiction was obviously enhanced by the 1997 film adaptation (Verhoeven and Neumeier) and the 09/11 WTC attacks. The critics experienced a narrative epiphany; Heinlein resurrected as a possibly cynical visionary instead of a reactionary rightist. Hence, I seek to establish an updated critical perspective of Heinlein's fictions and transcend the fallacious clichés associated to his reputation. The other reason - encompassing the choice of a critical review - is the understanding of professional readers' extent of appraisal of Heinlein' novel, which will be later completed within fan readers and 'novice' / 'amateur' recipients.

IV.3.1. Before 2000: a reputation's establishment

Beyond recall, ground base Heinlein criticism involves a brief review of the significant receptions of writer's controversial works. Before the 2000s, Heinlein narratives were met with mixed reviews, while the post 2000 criticism leaned towards a more regenerated view of his works. That ascertainment would be matched with readers' responses in the last chapter.

Baird Searles' *Cliffs Notes on Heinlein's Works* (1975) is a students' oriented guide to the works of Robert A. Heinlein. Searles does not deny the ambiguity of *Starship Troopers*, but prefers to focus on the legacy of the novel and its cultural impact (pp 33-34). In *The American Shore, Meditations on a Tale of Science Fiction* by Thomas M. Disch, Samuel R. Delany (1978) refers to Heinlein's readership and how his narration conflates text: "as the text generates both its inward and its outward discourses ... [and makes storylines] ... vis-à-vis the quotidian life of its tellers and hearers." (p.65). Delany points the SF contractual agreement that characterizes Heinlein's fiction and its recipients. Franklin, H. Bruce's *Robert A. Heinlein: America as Science Fiction* (1980) remains a major reference in Heinlein studies. In his seminal work, Franklin purports to make analogies between the 20th century American History and Robert A. Heinlein's fiction. For the essayist, Heinlein is a witness and agent of the US cultural zeitgeist.

George E. Slusser and Eric S. Rabkin's *Aliens: The Anthropology of Science Fiction* (1987) devoted large critical portions to the understanding of Heinlein's sense of otherness. Reference is made to the characterization of the 'Other' and the moral relativist standpoint which consists in dehumanizing the enemy to justify its ruthless extermination: "H. G. Wells' Selenites become "insects" in *The First Men on the Moon* and Robert Heinlein's Pseudo- Arachnids become "Bugs" in his popular *Starship Troopers*. These abusive and biologically inaccurate terms facilitate the use of violence against extraterrestrials " (p. 133).

Slusser and Rabkin use SF analogies to remind readers of the classic racist tradition which hierarchize populations and species. They use *Starship Troopers* as an illustration of Cold War anxieties: "In this regard, we should recall that racist ideologies commonly justify discrimination, oppression, and slavery by arguing the

“differentness” of the subordinate ethnic group, a “differentness” which puts them beyond the pale of the in-group’s morality” (pp 133-134). Slusser and Rabkin temper their statements with an attempt to explain Rico’s fear of the Bugs (Arachnid-like insects) with a possible primal fear of spiders (p. 136).

Heinlein criticism, marked by the Reagan Years, has taken another turn in the study of populism and friendly fascism. Hence, Michael Orth¹⁰ (*Reefs on the Right: Fascist Politics in Contemporary American Libertarian Utopias*, 1990) and Peter Fitting¹¹ (*Utopias Beyond Our Ideals: The Dilemma of the Right-Wing Utopia*, 1991) have undertaken to discard socialist and collectivist clichés and focus on militarism and belligerence in utopian fiction. Fitting (1991) takes Heinlein’s *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* as an instance of how left-wing utopian ideals get corrupted and mutate into right-wing dystopia (p. 97). Fitting reminds Heinlein’s established reputation, as the most popular SF writer (p. 103) but remains prudent, as to the moral color of his utopian construct. The main reproach, formulated by Fitting, is that US values make of violence a necessary mode to make change (p. 104).

After Heinlein’s death, scholars’ quest to rehabilitate the writer culminated in the staging of homage, accolades and tributes. Yoji Kondo (1992) has collected Heinlein’s late works and a series of lauds to the Dean of SF. The editor issued *New Collected Works by Robert A Heinlein Requiem and Tribute to the Grand Master*. Thus, among many, Tom Clancy (the American novelist) acknowledges Heinlein’s legacy (p. 172). Poul Anderson, a fan reader and SF writer, states that he: “never joined in the idiot cries of ‘fascist!’ It was plain that the society of *Starship Troopers* is, on balance, more free than ours today.” (p. 176) Another writer, Jack Williamson, speaks of his correspondences with Heinlein. He confesses that he was troubled by *Starship Troopers*’ overtone but he confesses that the novel was “written though not published as a juvenile” (p. 229). The testimonies of Heinlein fan readers appear sincere and committed. They allow seeing the man, not the writer, as an articulate, witty, and composed person.

¹⁰In *Contemporary American Libertarian Utopias*, *Extrapolation* 31 (Winter 1990), pp 293-316. Kent University State.

¹¹In *Utopian Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1/2 (1991), pp. 95-109 Published by: Penn State University Press.

IV.3.2. The 2000s : New Millennium, New Criticism

The year 2000 has been a symbolically feared date after which the world would have collapsed. Nothing apocalyptic has come to happen. The advent of a new millennium has changed perceptions of the realities of the world. The critical perspectives have set new reading paradigms, such as: race, gender, religion, globalization, and post-colonialism. This fact stands for Heinlein's criticism.

Herbert G. Klein (*Loonies and Others in Robert A. Heinlein's The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*¹², 2000) frames an analogy between the postcolonial condition of Heinlein's characters and the issues of authority and subordination within his other narratives (p.152). Klein pays particular attention to the rise of the consciousness of the machines. For him, Heinlein instates artificial intelligence, computers, and robots as tools and agents of emancipation (p. 153).

Adam Roberts (*Science Fiction*, 2000) enunciates his thesis on otherness in *Starship Troopers* by a fixation on the representation of the Bugs:

... those books that challenge the more reactionary SF notion of 'alien' as villain, the sort of representation to be found in texts such as Robert Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* (1959), in which a quasi-fascist military society is engaged in a prolonged and bloody interstellar war against repulsive giant insectoid aliens. Heinlein's giant bugs are one apotheosis of 'the enemy': they have none of the qualities humanity has traditionally valued, qualities like compassion, intellect, culture, spirituality, and they are unambiguously devoted to the violent destruction of our kind. They are also hive creatures, without a separate, individual existence (p. 101).

¹² In *Science Fiction, Imperialism and the Third World: Essays on Postcolonial Literature and Film*. Ericka Hoagland and Reema Sarwal (Editors), pp 141-155.

Roberts (2000) introduces a clever commentary on Heinlein and his readership. For him, only male readers can relate to the storylines: “For readers who share Heinlein’s right-wing libertarian politics, especially those readers of the 1950s or 1960s, they are easily read as a straightforward code for ‘communists’. For many women, SF that writes this sort of opposition is too facile.” (p. 101) Adam Roberts refers to Jenny Wolmark work¹³ on the female perspective in SF:

The science fiction convention of the alien attempts to present otherness in unitary terms, so that ‘humanity’ is uncomplicatedly opposed to the ‘alien’; both Jones and Butler focus on the way in which the opposition seeks to suppress the others of both gender and race by subsuming them within a commonsense notion of what it is to be human.” (Wolmark¹⁴ 1994:46)

Roberts joins Wolmark in the belief that SF contains racial demonization of other species. Roberts uses *Starship Troopers* as a representation of that fact: “Most aliens embody some degree of awareness of difference, which might be encoded in various ways such as race, culture or gender” (p. 119). Heinlein denies this axiom for the insects, but allows color diversity for his main protagonist. The account found in Tom Moylan’s *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (2000) may explain the previous view (found also in Roberts, 2000). In fact, Moylan presents Heinlein as a product of the Libertarian Right who is sometimes entangled with Old Left’s values: nation, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, sexuality...etc, (p. 31).

Adam Roberts reiterates his criticism of Heinlein in *The History of Science Fiction* (2006). He uses Darko Suvin¹⁵’s term *Senilia* to describe Heinlein’s dementia (p. 201). Nevertheless, he acknowledges his deep knowledge of populist ideologies and his fetishism regarding authority (p. 201). Roberts admits that “*Starship Troopers* is one of the most Hawkish SF novels ever written (...) the novel is quasi fascist.

¹³ *Aliens and Others : Science Fiction, Feminism and Postmodernism*. University of Iowa Press, 1994

¹⁴ Quoted in Adam Roberts, *Science Fiction*. 2000, p101.

¹⁵ See : *Suppositions and Presuppositions in Science Fiction*, 1988.

Understandably; Heinlein resented accusations of fascism from the first (such accusations were made almost as soon as it was published” (p. 202). Roberts concludes with a more complex appraisal of Heinlein’s ideological concerns. Adam Roberts claims that:” Heinlein was ideologically invested in neither racial nor geographical ideals, and his books consistently advocate a studiously responsible ‘Contrarian’ position .. ” (p. 203). Roberts seems to believe that Heinlein’s writings are consistent and pragmatic. This affirmation will be verified later in this dissertation.

M. Keith Booker cites frequently Heinlein in his contributions: *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War - American Science Fiction and the Roots of Postmodernism, 1946-1964* (2001); *Science Fiction and the Cold War*¹⁶ (2005) and *Alternate Americas - Science Fiction Film and American Culture* (2006). Booker constructs the Heinlein ‘problematic’ in Jameson’s thought as a product of late capitalism, and a postmodern realism (2001: 28). He places Heinlein in the Right political chessboard, in contrast with Asimov, Vonnegut, and Barzman who lean to the Left (2001: 48). Booker believes that Heinlein’s extremism may be explained by an utter belief in individual liberties (2001:49), and defends Heinlein readership from any manipulation via the fact that: “propaganda only works if its recipients get the message, so Heinlein is careful to ensure that this connection will indeed be made, even by the most literal minded of readers” (2001: 49).

The attention given by Booker to Heinlein readership fits the current tendencies in studying audiences’ reception instead of the writers’ intentions. Hence, he ensures that: “... Heinlein (...) could be pretty confident that his readers endorse these harsh measures against such unremittingly alien enemy” (2001: 51). Further, he believes that the novel is a call to war, in a moment where the USA has undertaken appeasement policy with the USSR. Booker recalls his own reading of the book as an awkward criticism of Marxism and socialism, which is at the same time as indoctrinating (in its soldiers’ education) as the Soviets’ war machines are (2001: pp 52-53).

Booker proceeds by explaining the ‘supposed cognitive dissonance’ of Heinlein in the comparison of human and insects’ collectivism:

¹⁶In David Seed (editor), *A Companion to Science Fiction*. 2005, pp 171- 184

For Heinlein, only military discipline can harness this natural survivalist tendency in human beings and put it to good use, though Heinlein here gets entangled in the contradictions of his own arguments. On the one hand, he presents military discipline as involving first and foremost a willingness to sacrifice the individual in the interest of the group - which makes the human military seem rather similar to the Bug communists. On the other hand, he makes a sharp distinction between the liberality with which the Bugs sacrifice individual soldiers and the willingness of the human military to sustain huge losses to rescue even one of their number who happens to be in trouble (2001: 54).

Without naming it, Booker points cognitive dissonance in the inconsistencies of Heinlein's attitude (attraction-repulsion) to the arachnids' socio-political organization. Booker clears Heinlein from full responsibility of his statements - as for him:

Heinlein was never a free thinker – just clearly promilitary and anticommunist. But the contradictions in thought are not merely problems with his personal logic. They are, in fact, highly representative of popular American thought in the 1950s, which consistently found itself in constant contradictions ... Meanwhile, Americans could celebrate both individual liberty and personal sacrifice, culminating, in the 1950s, in a distinctive simultaneous fear of being like everyone else (2001: 54).

Booker ends his dissertation by the conclusive fact that *Starship Troopers* left an indelible print in US culture, and that part of this culture is the permanent creation of otherness in the form of an enemy.

Nickianne Mood (2002) brings back the notions of gender in Heinlein's novel. *Displacements of Gender and Race in Space: Above and Beyond*¹⁷ speaks of Women and color representation in SF. Mood's preliminary talk refers to one essential characteristics of the genre. She describes SF as a white man dominant genre and quotes Margaret Mead:

It is possible in that the historical refusal to give women weapons may be due not to the rejection of putting the power of death into the hands of those who give life, but rather because women who kill ... are more implacable and less subject to chivalrous rules with which men seek to mute the savagery of warfare" (p. 62).

SF modeled the naturalistic view of women's role in characterization. The scholar theorizes this view with reference to Heinlein's narratives and Verhoeven's version: "*Starship Troopers* raises anxieties about contemporary femininity. The two women in the love triangle with Rico (...) do not develop skills, qualities or maturity of a character. They remain exactly as they appeared to Rico in high school..." (p. 66). Moody deplores the hegemony of heteronormativity in both the book and the film. As for Heinlein, it is understandable (his era was patriarchal), it is less evident in Verhoeven rendition. The possible explanation is the puritan belief that controlling her sexuality, Dizzy (the dismissed lover) would be able to attain her professional goals (p. 67). Next to this, lies the inevitable cliché which consists in creating female contenders that obey to the stratification of roles in the army. The latter sanctifies the unegalitarian gender roles and gender morality (p. 68). Moody is aware that women (and men) who do their military services can marry and have children-making license. The control of the propagation of species is more than an authoritarian doctrine. She is not uncomfortable with this idea but questions the perpetration of antifeminism in SF. For Heinlein (and Verhoeven even more) women can only operate from experiences of

¹⁷ In Ziauddin Sardar and Sean Cubitt (Editors). *Aliens R Us: The Other in Science Fiction Cinema* . 2002, pp 51 – 73.

objectification. J. P. Telotte (*Science Fiction Film*, 2004) assumes that objectification in *Starship Troopers* (the film) is inclusive to all human and insects, as a result of mass technologization and the gradual dehumanization of mankind (p. 179).

IV.3.3. Mid 2000s: critical diversification

The Heinlein criticism of the mid-2000s returns to the political explication (not from a Cold War perspective) but rather from a post 09/11 view. Laura Chernaik's *Social and Virtual Space: Science Fiction, Transnationalism, and the American New Right* (2005) explores Heinlein's fiction as interplay between postmodern realities and political data. Chernaik endorses the belief that Heinlein has shaped a character prototype a: "Heinleinesque individual," the autonomous hero, living in an Edenic wilderness" (p.118). The researcher observes the globalized vision of heroism and patriotism which is not Americanized but globalized.

Roz Kaveney's *From Alien to The Matrix, Reading Science Fiction Film* (2005) presents a comprehensive analysis of Verhoeven's appropriation of Heinlein's work. The most significant paradigm, in his study, is that the Heinlein-Verhoeven entity is a link between an author and the assumed reader (p. 09), and that the film adaptation is the result of misunderstanding of Heinlein's fiction: Verhoeven has transposed recycled European Fascism to American patriotism (p. 10) and confronted the Heinlein assumed readership to their prejudices against militarism (p. 11). Kaveney rejects the novel's alleged fascism and prefers to charge it as a right-wing celebrating the patriarchy (p. 11). This sociopolitical portrait is punctuated by homoeroticism, latent homosexuality, and gender conflict (p. 13) in the novel, while the movie tends to veil the sexual expressions and substitute them for gore violence, mutilations, and decapitations ...in sum sadism (pp 14-15). Kaveney is emphatic with the novel and virulent against the film. For him, Verhoeven has transformed the narrative into Anglicized and Americanized pop culture product. The critic concludes by stating that the filmmaker certainly loathes the novel, and that this could explain the deformation of the initial discourse.

The seminal work of Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (2005), achieves another comprehensive

reading of Heinlein's fiction. Far from any interpretive charity¹⁸, Jameson explains Heinlein's narratives as anti-utopian (p. 195). He uses *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* (1966) to illustrate the corruption of utopian beliefs and their transformation into dystopian doctrines. Jameson reintroduces Suvin's 'cognitive estrangement' to explain how Heinlein and Aldiss assign their audiences to mind games:

Aldiss and Heinlein always come before us as signs: they ask us to take them as equivalents for the cultural habits of our own daily lives, they beg to be judged on their intention rather than by what they actually realize, to be read with complicity rather than for the impoverished literal content. But this apparently inevitable failure of the imagination is not so disastrous aesthetically as one might expect: on the contrary, it projects an estrangement effect of its own, and our reaction is not so much disappointment at the imaginative lapses of Aldiss and Heinlein as rather bemusement with the limits of human vision (p. 256).

Jameson's view examines the degree to which the reader is to be held (p. 256). In the case of Heinlein's fiction, the utopian / dystopian design is molded by readers alone – aided by weak signals (which go crescendo to stronger ones) that are amplified through the reception and response. The fact is that, as outlined by Jameson, Heinlein's Juveniles were predestined to young readers. Therefore, Heinlein has deliberately confused his readership by either sending mixed or insidious signals. Jameson hesitates in naming *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, but considers using terms like Neo-Fascist to describe the fiasco of the anarchist revolution, and the dystopian disillusionment of its aftermath (p. 196).

The editor David Seed assembled a critical corpus of contemporary SF. The book *A Companion to Science Fiction* (2005) is a must in the understanding of modern

¹⁸ A concept in logic / philosophy which states that, in matters of interpretation, one has to look for the most rational, logical, and objective exegesis of a phenomenon. The theoretical foundations of this principle are found in N. L. Wilson, *Substances without Substrata*. The Review of Metaphysics, Vol. 12, No. 4, 1959, pp 521-539.

interpretations of the genre. Therein, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr (Science Fiction/Criticism pp 43-59); Marleen S. Barr (*Feminist Fabulation* pp 142 – 155) and Rob Latham (*The New Wave* pp 202- 216) provide inspirational perusal of SF – addressing questions of Heinlein’s political views, gender issues, and race. Csicsery-Ronay (2005) notes that SF writers (including Heinlein) endeavor to balance their discourse between populism and elitism (p. 50). Barr (2005) affirms that women readers do not appreciate Asimov and Heinlein, because they do not relate to their characters; since SF being not a feminist genre (p. 143). Ultimately, Latham (2005) attempts a re-contextualization of *Starship Troopers*, but admits that the novel is jingoistic¹⁹ xenophobia (p. 214).

As an essayist, David Seed has issued fundamental criticism of SF and its political entanglements. In *Science Fiction, A Very Short Introduction* (2011), he grants Heinlein with the craft of making his readers rethink their own environment (referring to Suvin) and an even greater talent in speculating about their future (p. 01). In his book *Under the Shadow: The Atomic Bomb and Cold War Narratives* (2013), Seed highlights Heinlein’s survival instincts²⁰: fear of assault, home invasion, and colonization. It is suggested that *Starship Troopers* is a manifestation of dread and fear from Communist invasion. Seed quotes Heinlein’s essay “*How to be a Survivor*” and explains that *Starship Troopers* (1959) and *Farnham's Freehold* (1964) have been almost epidermal reactions to the anguish of subjection to a Stalinist world order (pp 71-72). Fragments of this explanation are found, also, in Melvin E. Matthews, Jr.’s *Hostile Aliens, Hollywood and Today’s News: 1950s Science Fiction Films and 9/11* (2007). Matthews, Jr. reports this classical fear that tainted 1950s and 1970s fiction²¹, and which is subsequent of Red Scare.

Undoubtedly, Darko Suvin is the scholar who has synthesized most exhaustively the essence of SF. For this purpose, I have devoted an entire section to

¹⁹ Exacerbated patriotism.

²⁰ Heinlein disapproved Eisenhower decision to suspend nuclear tests and moved from Los Angeles to Colorado Springs. His new home happens to be in the middle of USA’s nuclear arsenal. His new house was, then, a potential, target for the Reds. He decides to build a bunker to shelter with his wife Virginia. *Starship Troopers* has been written in the bunker.

²¹ This includes the *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Don Seigel 1956 and Phillip Kaufman, 1978) and Abel Ferrara (*Body Snatchers*, 1993, all based on Jack Finney’s novel (*The Body Snatchers*, 1955), inspired from Heinlein’s *The Puppet Masters*, 1951.

the study of his cognitive estrangement theory. As matter of fact, Suvin has paid particular attention to Heinlein's prose. *In Suppositions and Presuppositions in Science Fiction* (1988) poses the writer as nest of contradictions. Suvin believes that Heinlein is a 'wrong narrator' and that this condition has incidences on his readership (p. 16). Suvin directs attention to Heinlein's historical antinomies (p. 52). These contradictions are first caused by semantic constructions (such as oxymora):

Thus, a critic trying to construct a conceptual system by refusing to see the paradox which is at the core of Heinlein's narration is wrong- even when a clever arguer - because she/he has succumbed to an unexamined ideology. It is precisely the author's self-contradictions which should be explored. Equally, the significant SF writers in our time - say Delany, Dick, Le Guin, Lem, Piercy, Spinrad, the Strugatskys, Tiptree - all deal in quite painful contradictions, often within their protagonist(s). To remain bound by the author's consciousness means for the critic to abdicate his/her cognitive task in favour of ideology (1988: 53).

A priori, Suvin confirms a general tendency if SF writers: inconsistencies and approximate ideological claims. He focuses on Heinlein's particularity in manipulating his readers with the projection of contradictory statements which force them to introduce peculiar thinking modes.

In his paper *Of Starship Troopers and Refuseniks: War and Militarism in U.S. Science Fiction, Part 1*²² – 1945-1974 Fordism, Darko Suvin (2007) sets his discussion with Frederic Jameson word²³: "Autopsies are the place in which anatomy lessons are learned" (p. 115). Suvin undertakes a historical reckoning of Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*. The SF scholar assimilates the novel to a dead body that would

²²In Donald M. Hassler, Clyde Wilcox (editors). *New Boundaries in Political Science Fiction*, 2008, pp 115-144

²³In Frederic Jameson, 's *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 1991 p 398

reveal more evidence than when it is alive. This metaphor illustrates the need for re-reading the narrative away from the socio-historical pressure. Suvin considers Heinlein's prose as a product of an ambiguous ascent of historical texts (p. 121) hostage of a socio-cultural condition. He distinguishes two trends in American science fiction: two souls of American SF (p. 122). The first is militaristic and belligerent, while the second strives for peacekeeping: "These stances can be overt or hidden ... I believe that it is much healthier for a culture when spit within it are brought to the surface, when they can be openly discussed with a chance for understanding as a precondition to understanding to a resolution" (p. 122).

Suvin rejects any prejudicial condemnation of militaristic fictions, as he considers that the unsaid and the tabooed are unproductive and dangerous. Suvin avows discomfort with Heinlein's ambiguity (p. 123) and his bestialization of the enemy (p. 139). For him, Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* is a viral ancestral text that has infected SF narratives with jingoistic doctrine (p. 123). He further alludes to the novelist's provocative reference to Hitler's Storm Troopers²⁴ and the belief in *lebensraum*²⁵ (vital space) Darwinism (man is an animal) (p. 124). Nevertheless, Suvin confesses his admiration to Heinlein whom he considered as an intelligent, original-mind (p. 127), and that he is the most significant writer of 1939-1961, and among the two three most influential writers (p. 125).

Suvin enacts that Heinlein's "stance in *Starship Troopers* is one of his most many ambiguous and radical but also radically thought experiment" (p. 125). Having, already, criticized the narratological artifacts of Heinlein²⁶ and poses the criticism of *Starship Troopers* in different terms: "The major strength and flaw of *Starship Troopers* lies in the fact that Heinlein certainly loathes the world to which he belongs, and has felt the need to mutilate it (p. 126). In that, Suvin quotes Heinlein's word²⁷: "Earth is beautiful only when it is viewed from distance, where people and their civilization cannot be seen" (p. 126).

²⁴ Also known as *Sturmabteilung*; Hitler's paramilitary faction of the Nazi Party.

²⁵ A geopolitical concept coined by the 19th Century German geographer Friedrich Ratzel who pleaded for territorial control and expansion.

²⁶ See *Suppositions and Presuppositions on Science Fiction*, 1988.

²⁷ Howard Bruce Franklyn. *Robert A. Heinlein: America as Science Fiction* (1980: 10).

In *Of Starship Troopers and Refuseniks: War and Militarism in U.S. Science Fiction, Part 2*, Suvin (2007) embarks in a more visible criticism of Heinlein whom he associates with Jerry Pournelle²⁸. Suvin relatively blames Heinlein for having radiated American SF writers with right-wing ideas (p. 14). In this respect, he cites *Farnham's Freehold* (1964) as the sum of institutionalized racism. This term may be extended to speciesism²⁹ and other manifestation of discrimination. Suvin reintroduces his agential theory of characters to highlight speciesist view (round characters: humans' vs. flat characters: the 'Bugs'). Suvin backslides and exhorts the understanding of Heinlein's narrative matrix:

Almost all the narrative agents in militarist SF, from Heinlein's archetypal Space Soldier called Johnny Rico on, repose on an irreconcilable contradiction (...) What Jameson would call the personal and the tale of the tribe are simultaneously contrary to each other and a source of potential strength. In military SF, you must be both a hero and an interchangeable cog in the all-encompassing machine (p. 18).

Suvin insists on some elementary facts, part of which is the core of pro-military SF. For him, the entire process is reader-centered. In other words, SF writers assail recipients and enclose them in pro-military narratives. This act of socializing the readers (p. 19) tailors their beliefs in pro-war certainties and justifying colonization.

In Verhoeven's version validates Suvin statements about imperialism and neo-colonialism and exaggerates the fascistic tendencies present in the US. As noted by Lincoln Geraghty (*American Science Fiction Film and Television*, 2009), otherness is evil, and the inferior 'Bugs' are contrasted with the enlightened human race. This hierarchical view justifies men's colonization of the 'Bugs' territories.

²⁸ An American SF novelist and essayist, whose fiction adhered to strong militarism. He is a Neo-Heinleinian in his promotion of war craft and space conquest. His major works include *High Justice* (1974), *Birth of Fire* (1976), *Exiles to Glory* (1978) and *King David's Spaceship* (1980).

²⁹ A term coined by Richard D. Ryder in 1970. It is used to describe the thought that species are hierarchically classified. The term was associated to racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination. See: Richard D. Ryder, *Speciesism Again: The Original Leaflet*. Critical Society, Issue 2, Spring 2010, pp 01-02.

IV.3.4. 2010s Onwards: the predominance of race and gender

The last phase of Heinlein's millennial criticism focuses on the notions of gender and race. Criticism has reflected the concerns of American culture (the glass ceiling, same-sex marriage, white men privilege ...etc). De Witt Douglas Kilgore's *Difference Engine: Aliens, Robots, and Other Racial Matters in the History of Science Fiction* (2010) explores the awkwardness of SF in the representation of sexuality and racial matters (p. 16). Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* is pointed as the advent of a post-racial future. Isiah Lavender III's *Race in American Science Fiction* (2011) is an insightful frontal incursion in SF's depiction of race and ethnicity issues. For Lavender, Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* has prefigured key concepts in whiteness studies³⁰: white estrangement³¹, racialized emotions and blackness vs. whiteness.

For the scholar: "Science Fiction, then, reflects current social problems set against a fictive history beyond our experience of historical reality – the bugs of Robert A. Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* (1959) readily come to mind" (p. 41). In Lavender's view, Heinlein has mapped a racial discourse in which manliness and whiteness shape the dominant canons. He asserts that the dean of science fiction brews the racial issue in Darwinian, colonial, and speciesist optics (p. 159). He quotes the novel's most controversial line: "violence, naked force, has settled more issues in history than any other factor ... Breeds that forget this basic truth have always paid for it with their lives and freedoms (1959:26)"(p. 159). If read from a whiteness angle, Heinlein would be a fierce supporter of what is called the Whitopia³². In fact, *Starship Troopers* sanctifies speciesist purity which sends back to European ethnic purification theses of the 1930s. Lavender analyses Johnny Rico's character as having undergone a racial reassignment:

A character from South America is not odd in itself, but it is rather strange to have a minority as the major figure of

³⁰ A late 20th century interdisciplinary approach that purports to study white identities and their cultural influence. The major tenants of this theory are W.E. Dubois (*Voices from Within the Veil*, 1920), James Baldwin (*The Fire Next Time*, 1963; *On Being White and Other Lies*, 1984) and Theodore W. Allen (*The Invention of the White Race*, Vol. I: *Racial Oppression and Social Control*, 1994; Vol. II: *The Origin of Racial Oppression in Anglo-America*, 1997).

³¹ See Veronica T. Watson's *The Souls of White Folk African American Writers*, 2013, pp 03-14.

³² See Benjamin Rich's *Searching for Whitopia: an Improbable Journey to the Heart of White America*, 2009.

the text and anglicize him with the white nickname Johnnie. The name change from Juan to Johnnie signals the colonial impulse to lighten the darker races (p. 160).

Lavender outlines the pernicious whitening of the colored through name shift. Yet, he acknowledges Heinlein's discourse evolution on the melting pot culture: "Multiculturalism becomes relevant in this sense because Heinlein recognizes that the face of American is changing" (p. 224). The symptoms of this change include mixed marriage, unorthodox sexualities, counter-culture (p. 224).

Lavender links this evolution to *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* (1966). The scholar formulates a hypothesis on the Loonies dialect that he assimilates to Midwestern African American vernacular English (p. 226). In this anarchist fiction, Lavender believes that Heinlein uses consciously racial antagonisms to manipulate the audience assumptions about the blacks (p. 227). The racial tensions that exist between Terrans and the Loonies, and among the Loonies themselves, are represented in the form of contagion to expose Heinlein's view of racism (p. 230). For Lavender, Heinlein has developed an ethnoscape³³ in which interracial movements illustrate otherness, otherhood, and racial integration. Lavender assumes that the fortitude of Heinlein has been his capacity to challenge the doxa on races.

Though unnamed in Lavender's book, his analysis suggests that Heinlein anticipated two concepts of postmodern cultural criticism: gentrification and white flight. Gentrification is the re-appropriation (or colonization) of urban spaces achieved by upper-class citizens in poor districts³⁴. The White Flight, on the other hand, is the evasion of white population at the arrival and increase of new black residents. It is worth mentioning that Heinlein's racial/speciesist considerations establish land-sovereignty contentions – opposing the bourgeois (Terrans) and the leftovers (Loonies). Heinlein's preoccupations might have been the theorization of racial

³³ A concept coined by Arjun Appadurai in cultural studies. Shaped in *Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy* (1990) and *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (1996) he explains the ethnoscape as a space in which race-based cultural divergences (such as those found in diasporas, migrants, refugees and tourists) change international rules and individual perspectives.

³⁴ See Ruth Glass's *London: Aspects of Change* (1964),

displacements in terms of power over territories. Heinlein's obsession of space and transhumance (in its broadest sense) and its implications for human fulfillment include speciesist and ethnic challenges. This view is backed by John Cheng, in *Astounding Wonder: Imagining Science and Science Fiction in Interwar America* (2012), where he outlines Heinlein's progressivism and enthusiasm for change (p. 297). This change includes space conquest as a momentum.

On a related subject, M. Elizabeth Ginway and J. Andrew Brown's *Latin American Science Fiction : Theory and Practice* (2012) and Thomas M. Barrett's *Heart of a Serpent? The Cold War Science Fiction of Murray Leinster* (2012) question the US expansionism and imperialism. Barrett contrasts Heinlein's fiction with Murray Leinster (pro-peace popular SF writer). He explains that SF themes of global expansionism are inherited from Cold War trauma and the theory of Containment³⁵. The fear of a nuclear apocalypse (p. 195) has led SF writers to validate preventive war theory and right of intervention in foreign countries' domestic affairs.

To close this section on updated Heinlein criticism, particular attention is paid to the most anecdotic approaches to Heinlein and his narratives. A special mention goes to Lewis Call's *BDSM³⁶ in American Science Fiction and Fantasy* (2013). Call reveals Heinlein's openness to odd lifestyles and his constant *épater-le-bourgeois*³⁷ depictions of alternative sexualities (p. 20). Call states that Heinlein was obsessed by nudism and polyamory (multiple sexual partnerships), and it was reflected in his prose. *A Stranger in a Strange Land* and *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* have glorified the sexual revolution of the 1960s: orgies, interracial relationships, even reaching the ultimate taboo: incestuous desires (in *Time Enough for Love*, 1973). For Call, Heinlein's influence in the change of morals is undeniable (p. 20), but he argues that the writer did not hurdle the frontier of straightness. The scholar believes that Heinlein's morals are elitist and WASP. Heinlein's dream of a sexual utopia was

³⁵ A geopolitical strategy of the US administration under Harry Truman which has consisted in circumscribing Communism through the support of fragile countries and the occupation of buffer areas: Korea and Vietnam, for instance.

³⁶ Acronym for: bondage, domination and sadomasochism.

³⁷ A French expression (which means literally shocking the bourgeois) that designates the decadent French poets (Rimbaud, Verlaine, and Baudelaire) and their perversity in sexual demeanor.

contributive in the evolution of gender discourse and practices, in a country where violence is more tolerated than naughtiness³⁸.

Far from moral considerations, the second anecdote concerns the diversity of Heinlein's readership and his internationalization. The paper of Isfahan University Ladani Zahra Jannessari (*Robert A. Heinlein in Historical and Cultural Context*³⁹, 2015) shows the radiance of Heinlein's over an Iranian scholar in particular, and non American readers in general. Heinlein has earned an international notoriety that is envisaged in a North-South perspective. The evidence, here, is that Heinlein's visionary scopes reveal their non-exclusivity to the American world. The author seems to have crossed an intellectual border and can, hence, be read as a construct of neo-imperialism, virtual expansionism and globalization.

Conclusion

Starship Troopers galvanized the most extreme critical reactions and the attacks concerned both the writer and the chosen political themes. Critics have feigned forgetting one fact: the original narrative was the product of Heinlein's confinement in a bunker⁴⁰ out of his fear of the Soviets' invasion. This fiction analogizes a writer's dread of totalitarianism with the fascistic potential retaliation of a Western democratic state. As a nest of contradiction, Heinlein and his disputed narrative fed a criticism corpus made of hesitations between the qualifiers: utopianism vs. fascism. Furthermore, the film version shaped another sphere of criticism made of associations and dissociation with the novel, as well as judgmental postures on the spread of friendly fascism inside the US. The reception was dissonant, notably on the intent of the filmmakers, but with considerable regret and change-belief after the 09/11 drifts of the state's domestic and foreign policies: The Patriot Act, The Axis of Evil, and Preventive War for instance.

The three-phase historical criticism of Heinlein's oeuvre shows the resurgence and obsolescence of thematic concerns, with constants and variations. The

³⁸ See : Mark E. Wildermuth's *Gender, Science Fiction Television, and the American Security State 1958–Present* (2014).

³⁹ In *Critical Insights: Robert A. Heinlein*, Edition: 1st, Chapter: 2, Publisher: Salem Press, Editor: Rafeeq McGiveron, 2015, pp.27-41.

⁴⁰ Heinlein was afraid for his physical integrity (See *Prophets of Science fiction*, episode 7, 2012).

most prolific and varied criticism is found in the mid-2000s – subsequent to the 09/11 attacks and the film adaptation. This resurrection of the interest is imputed to the new appraisal given to *Starship Troopers*. There is an actual uncertainty of this new criticism: no consensus is found around Heinlein's narratives. Criticism hails the fortitude of the writer in tackling subversive political and moral themes. For instance colorblindness, individual liberties, and some depictions of otherness constitute progressive assets that grant him a certain consideration. On the other hand, Heinlein has moved (too far) backward flow and has stirred animosity and condemnation. Established criticism has suspected him of collusion with fascistic milieus and promotion of militarism. Similar ideas are developed in the post 2000 criticism which laments clichés of whiteness, misogyny, and essentializing stereotypes. Astonishingly, the most virulent attacks concern the absence of consistency along his works and the readers' treatment of these mixed signals.

Beyond the fluctuation of each epoch's torments, this section has theoretically outlined the evolution of a SF criticism from pure political concerns to societal issues – passing by premises of cognitive questioning. This review of Heinlein's criticism establishes a conceptual framework in which several analogies can be drawn: the Verhoeven-Neumeier adaptation of his narrative, the film criticism involving Heinlein, and the actual readers' reception and responses to them.

Done with the critical reception, pending questions remain as to the responses of non-established readers to Heinlein's writings and their probable cognitive dissonance in holding beliefs and formulating judgments about *Starship Troopers*: "the fascist utopia". The question of response imposes itself as a final – logical - step to measure the extent of this dissonance. The reception of *Starship Troopers* (novel and film, alike) has stimulated an ensemble of consonant and dissonant standpoints - as seen within the criticism corpus. Thus, a final question emerges: do lambda readers manifest the same inconsistent beliefs and confused judgments? I will attempt to answer the question in the next part.

Conclusion to Part Two

This part examined the concept of cognitive and cultural dissonances within Heinlein's Trilogy of liberty and self responsibility. The purpose was to verify the author's statement on the coherence of his works and his potential inconsistencies. Through a psychonarratological approach, I reported a discrete continuum between the three novels which correspond to an ideological mutation of Heinlein's discourse, along the cultural zeitgeist. The findings were bound to the criticism of Heinlein which appeared to have evolved accordingly. The initial critical reception hyperbolized the themes of *Starship Troopers* and instated it as a fascist manifesto. With the publication of *a Stranger in a Strange Land* and the *Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, the readings optics gradually changed into a more complex view of the man and his oeuvre. The 1997 film adaptation by Paul Verhoeven and Ed Neumeier revived the work of Heinlein and aroused a new criticism. Though partially unfaithful to the original material, the movie highlighted the latent drifts of the US society into paranoia and friendly fascism. The movie permitted the emergence of a new generation of readers to whom the author was unknown. The next part will highlight this particular interest and would collaterally unveil the scope of cognitive dissonance in reader's reception and responses.

PART THREE

The Fascist Utopia through Readers' Lenses and Responses

Introduction to Part Three

This last part is a departure from textual and authorial focus to readers' responses. The purpose is detecting and understanding the nature of cognitive dissonance within Heinlein's readership. This dissonance is manifested through verbal expressions of appraisals and judgments. Thus, the responses are studied through the junction of distant reading, sentiment analysis tools and conceptual paradigms found in Purves, Beach, Odell, and Cooper. In addition, Stanley Fish and Richard Lazarus are introduced in this section to complete the areas related to interpretive communities and appraisal theories. Their belated inclusion stemmed from extended readings on the interconnections of cognitive dissonance theory with the aforementioned theories.

The interdisciplinary approach is actualized in the montage of a methodological set – predicated on actual readers and their verbalized statements that constitute their responses to *Starship Troopers*. The objective, thus, is to unfold their potential cognitive dissonance – by including all conditions of contradiction, tension, or dissymmetric beliefs and judgments. This part also introduces the use of NVIVO as a qualitative sentiment analysis tool within the interpretive communities.

The second chapter involves a detailed description of Heinlein's readership's responses to the allegations of fascism encompassing the author and *Starship Troopers* – filigreed with cognitive dissonance. Though other Heinlein novels are cited, readers spontaneously over focused on *Starship Troopers* not that much because of its esthetic and poetic qualities, but because of its strong political content, and allusions to a post-fascist society which is in its way considerably fascistic-like.

Chapter V

***Starship Troopers* and cognitive dissonance: a
methodological framework of Distant Reading and
sentiment analysis**

Introduction

This chapter deals with actual readers' appraisal of the fascist utopia in Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* and both the theoretical and methodological outset for a distant reading. The aim is to constitute a rupture from close reading to distant reading and from context dependant to context free interpretations. Distant reading is a current trend in literary analysis incarnated by the Stanford Literary Lab, Franco Moretti and Gayatri Spivak. The claims of this trend are a synthesis of beliefs in the obsolescence of the traditional approaches to the literary text and, therefore, the need to reinvent the scholarly approaches with interdisciplinary optics.

The question of distance is crucial. It is legitimate to question the dimension of the potential distance. How distant must be distant reading? In this dissertation, readers and their responses seem to be the ideal distance so that a connection is kept to the text. Readers would make anchorage points between what they read, what they perceive, and how they do respond. For the methodological scaffolding, a logical elongation of reception and response theories impose corpus based sentiment analysis with Fish's interpretative communities as a general framework.

In this work, distant reading is also conceived as the encounter of readers' response with big data, opinion mining and sentiment analysis. The latter is a sub-discipline of content analysis used to study costumers and users' emotional responses (the nest of beliefs and judgments). In Heinlein narratives and their appraisals by readers, there is a correlation between the movie adaptation, internet 2.0 and the liberalization of opinions' expression through the web.

V.1. Distant reading: a transition to sentiment analysis

A layer of theory is missing at this point. It is the question of the evoked distant reading. This theory would be meant in the trespassing of the canons and the reinvention of new ones. Thus throughout the research, an emerging theory came to enrich the study: distant reading as new approach to the literary experience. This theory sustains my methodological focus on qualitative-computational approach to readers' responses. Gayatri Spivak's *Death of a Discipline* (2003) was amongst the first academic calls to reinvent comparative literature (in theory and method). In the

opening chapter (Crossing Borders: 01-24), the scholar explains the need to renovate comparative literature by operating a shift. The latter consists in the depoliticization of Area studies and the abolition of frontiers: Moving frontier of Area Studies/Comparative Literature that is always a “discipline to come,” through a type of language learning that fosters access to textuality. Part of this uncertain future is the growing virtualization of frontiers (p. 15).

Spivak proceeds by demonstrating how a historical sedimentation (p. 18) has instituted imperialism (p. 11) within literary theory, and which did not permit permeability between disciplines. She, also, questions the canons of national vs. international literature and the possibility of moving towards a institutional revolution with the academia and the scholars’ communities. For her, the doxa has imposed certain confinement rules that need to be overwhelmed:

There are, of course, many institutional obstacles to such collaboration. Among them is institutional fear on both sides. Disciplinary fear (...) [astonishingly urged] strong tendencies toward acknowledging the silent but central role of the humanities in the area studies paradigm are now around (p. 19).

The call for the debunking of comparative literature serves as defiance against the standards. Spivak introduces the notion of distant reading - in her reference to Jacques Derrida (p 30) – as a valid option to operate the change in the discipline.

The second act of renovation was Franco Moretti’s *Distant Reading* (2013). Founder of the Stanford Literary Lab, Moretti has theorized a challenging approach to the literary experience culminating in his statement: “don’t read”. Moretti seeks the perusing of an iconoclastic not say a heretic perspective on reading. Two chapters of the book (Conjectures on World Literature: 43- 62 and More Conjectures: 107-119) demolish the reading doxa that prevails over the academia. He claims his opposition to the circumscription of texts to their ages and considers that Marxist criticism (like Jameson) as relics from the past. Moretti advocates the invention of new reading

approaches in relation with the new narrative techniques introduced by literature and cinema. Both have introduced serialization (for instance) and thus a discontinuity with the established forms of reading. Moretti recalls that the etymological origin of the concept is a semantic shift from serial reading to distant reading (p. 44).

Moretti instated a trend in reading as recalled by Kathryn Schulz (2014). In her article *What is Distant Reading?*¹, the reviewer clarifies the essence of Moretti's conception of distant reading: "don't read"! :

As the literary ars lurches exponentially more longa — accommodating the printing press, "Gravity's Rainbow," Google Books — our collective TBR pile towers ever more vertiginously overhead. Which raises a question: What are we mortal beings supposed to do with all these books? Franco Moretti has a solution: don't read them ...

Schulz associates the turn of reading habits with the boom of digital literary edition. She supports the idea that a distance be placed between the reader and the literary material, for the purpose of assimilating, at least, the narrative traits. Obviously, one may disagree on the solution but not on the general ascertainment.

Other convergent assumptions are made by literary researchers. The new methodological incorporation can only be legitimated by the new trends in literary research which come to rethink literature as big data. The essential argument is that the literary offer has increased, and its assimilation has become almost impossible - together with the democratization of the Web and the dematerialization of literary supports². Ted Underwood's *Distant Reading and Recent Intellectual History* (2016) recalls the fact that distant reading is "better understood as part of a broad intellectual shift that has also been transforming the social sciences". Another fact is that this shift

¹ Kathryn Schulz. What is Distant Reading? June24, 2011. <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/26/books/review/the-mechanic-muse-what-is-distant-reading.html>. A version of this article appears in print on June 26, 2011, on Page BR14 of the Sunday Book Review with the headline: Distant Reading.

² Books, like films and music, are available – hitherto - on digital supports and not exclusively on materialized supports.

needs to be embodied with new methodological concepts of text. These conceptions often see texts as corpora. Distant reading appeals for interdisciplinarity and crossdisciplinarity in that it fuses ontological elements borrowed from various fields:

The change we are experiencing is precisely that quantitative and qualitative evidence are becoming easier to combine, blurring disciplinary boundaries. We're working on a methodological continuum now that extends from history and literature through linguistics and sociology. Scholars are still free to specialize in parts of the continuum, of course, and specialization is still valuable. But nothing prevents us from ranging more widely. Since human affairs are also a continuum, we should feel free to use whatever mixture of methods gives us leverage on a particular problem.

Underwood stresses the notions of evolution and continuum in the updating of literary research. A similar idea is developed by Andrew Goldstone (*The Doxa of Reading*, 2017) who considers the prior forms of literary research as part of a doxa and that remain difficult to challenge. Golden envisages the new forms of reading as an extension to corpora and computer-read texts. Goldstone cites Bourdieu (*The Rules of Art*, 1992) and reference to the elitism of literature and its gentrification:

In *The Rules of Art*, Bourdieu defines doxa as what participants in the literary field take for granted, the assumptions by which “cultivated people are in culture as in the air they breathe” (185). For literary scholars, the doxa is consists in belief in the inherent value and meaning of the literary object, “rooted in the job and ethos of the professional commentator on texts (p. 194).

Goldstone (2017) confirms the claims of Spivak and Moretti as to the isolationism and bunkerisation of comparative literature.

The scholar drafts his etymology on the mutation of the concept distant reading. He sustains the belief that distant reading encloses all the challenging attempts to redefine comparative literature, literary studies, and interdisciplinarity:

In “Conjectures on World Literature,” (...) Moretti introduces the phrase to describe “a patchwork of other people’s research, without a single direct textual reading” (Distant 48). Today, however, “distant reading” typically refers to computational studies of text. Introducing a 2016 cluster of essays on “Text Analysis at Scale,” Matthew Gold and Lauren Klein speak of “using digital tools to ‘read’ large swaths of text” as “‘distant reading’ ” (Introduction); in his contribution there, Ted Underwood embraces “distant reading” as a name for applying machine learning techniques to unstructured text (“Distant Reading”).

The synthesis made by Goldstone enables the conception of distant reading as a purposeful estrangement vis-à-vis the text through digital networking analysis or any other means capable of not corrupting the critical reader with narrative interferences.

At this level, the needed theoretical validation of the study of readers’ responses meets the methodological propositions of the dissertation. Thus, the notions of literature narratives as big data and data-scaling get their junctions with sentiment analysis. Consequently, the methodology would situate the reading distance at the level of the readers’ reception and responses in search of cognitive dissonance in Heinlein’s narrative. The theories of Fish on interpretive communities and Lazarus (to a minor extent) on appraisal theory will be used to complete the methodological landmarks of sentiment analysis as well as the general framework of the study. In other words, readers’ responses and their potential cognitive dissonance are analyzed (partially) digitally and then qualitatively in terms of beliefs and judgments.

V.2. Concrete Distant Reading and sentiment analysis

The post 2000s empirical researches in readers' responses have taken the turn of sentiment analysis and opinion mining. The following contributions have materialized (un)consciously the claims of Distant Reading. The work of Hammond³ (2009) - set in the academic milieu - proposes a study of readers' responses to graphic novels (comics) through the qualitative study of their oral and written feedback. Supervised by Richard Beach, Hammond introduced the encoding of the responses and analyzed them. In use, she utilized websites and softwares (p. 78) for the purpose of analyzing the readers' habits of reception, understanding of comics conventions and retelling.

At the operational level, Hammond resumes the works of her supervisor (the pioneer of empirical research in readers' responses) and enhanced them into the study of emotional responses:

Responses classified as opinion or evaluation expressed judgment about the content of the stories or quality of writing. Phrases that signaled this category of response included words such as liked/disliked, surprised, and enjoyed, or interesting, good, and funny (p. 93).

Furthermore, learners were asked to write their own comics. This task of production validates the assumptions obtained from the analysis of the recipients' reception and feedback. In this case, Distant Reading operates in mimicry, retelling, and free adaptation.

Juan-Jose Igaruta's *Identification with characters and narrative persuasion through fictional feature films*⁴ (2010) is a practical enforcement of sentiment analysis and Distant Reading. Igaruta has conducted three studies to unveil three paradigms: persuasion, attitudes, and beliefs. The work is centered on the study of readers' affect and film narratology on ten subjects (10 students of the University of Salamanca, p.

³ Heidi Kay Hammond. *Graphic Novels and Multimodal Literacy: A Reader Response Study*. Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Minnesota. – In Partial Fulfillment for the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Supervised by Dr. Richard Beach, February, 2009.

⁴ In Communications, Volume 35, Issue 4, pp 347–373.

355). He organized post-screening interviews in a qualitative questioning (see table below) to check the scope of emotional responses:

Items
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I thought I was like the characters or very similar to them • I thought that I would like to be like or act like the characters • I identified with the characters • I felt “as if I were one of the characters” • I had the impression that I was really experiencing the story of the characters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I felt as if I “formed part of” the story • I myself have experienced the emotional reactions of the characters • I understood the characters’ way of acting, thinking or feeling • I tried to see things from the point of view of the characters • I tried to imagine the characters’ feelings, thoughts and reactions • I understood the characters’ feelings or emotions • I was worried about what was going to happen to the characters • I felt emotionally involved with the characters’ feelings • I imagined how I would act if I found myself in the place of the protagonists

Table 15: readers’ affects sample responses⁵

The scholar also utilizes a binary classification made of positive and negative attitudes (see table below). This segment aims at establishing a cartography of the scope of attitude and change of affect (or belief) after screening.

Table 3. *Affective impact caused by viewing the Feature-Length Film ‘Poniente’. Student’s t for related samples (Study 2).*

Mood indicators	Pre-test		Post-test		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
• Positive affect (10–50)	23.32	6.37	23.41	6.62	−0.12	45	.901	0.013
• Negative affect (10–50)	14.48	5.75	22.04	7.77	−6.45	46	.000	1.106

Table 16: affective impact⁶

⁵The table (P 356) was edited partially. The scores were removed.

Igaruta's threefold study reveals a relative change of beliefs after screening. The interesting fact of this research is that it touches upon the notion of belief change. Another worth-mentioning quality is the use of a distanced psychonarratological framework in the study of emotional fluctuations.

Raymond A. Mar, Keith Oatley, Maja Djikic & Justin Mullin's *Emotion and narrative fiction: Interactive influences before, during, and after reading*⁷ (2011) reviews the major attempts of empirical research in readers' responses. The group of scholars consents the evidence that reading transforms emotions and affect. The extensive readings of Mar et al present a series of claims that were used in that last part of this dissertation. In fact, they advocate that sentiments intervene from the early stage of book selection to the final phase of judgments' production (p. 891) and that the cognitive factors (appraisal, motivation, anxiety...etc) do shape the forms of readers' beliefs and responses. After reviewing a considerable corpus of theory and empirical approaches, Mar et al have reached the conclusion that emotions are constantly evocated during the narrative experience and that the remembrance of a given fiction indicates multiple levels of sentiments: sympathy, identification and empathy. Hence, the post-reading would involve other emotions which may change after reading. Though unnamed, cognitive dissonance is skimmed as a possible incidence of the narrative reception (p. 830).

The last consulted contribution in Distant Reading and qualitative sentiment analysis is the one made by Anežka Kuzmičova, Anne Mangen, Hildegunn Stole & Anne Charlotte Begnum (2017). In their paper *Literature and readers' empathy: A qualitative text manipulation study*⁸, the researchers affirm their allegiance to Spivak's premonition on the obsolescence of frontiers between literature and humanities. In their view, they consider as this condition as: "the alleged crisis of the humanities is currently fueling renewed interest in the affective benefits of literary reading" (p. 137).

⁶ Op Cit. P 361.

⁷ In *Cognition & Emotion*, 25:5, 2011, pp 818-833.

⁸ In *Language and Literature*, Vol. 26 Sage Publication, 2017 pp 137-152.

Kuzmičova et al have dealt with the hypothetical nexus of literature and empathy (p. 140).

In their fieldwork, the scholars have attempted to establish cognitive underpinnings of the relation between narratology and affect transformation. The methodological design comprises an investigation of thirty-seven subjects' responses. In detail, the study focuses on their appraisal of specific narremes and their rating according to foreground interest:

We asked our subjects to mark any text passages that they found particularly striking or evocative in the course of reading. As a next step, the subjects were asked to select three of their markings and elaborate freely in writing on *how* the passages were striking or evocative to them (p. 141).

The responses were encoded (as data) and studied qualitatively. The respondents were asked to make three elaborations and highlight the most significant passages; those which are supposed to activate emotional transformations. Kuzmičova et al have not confirmed the hypothesis consisting in the affirmation of a correlation between reading and emotional mutation. Nevertheless, they conclude that readers do not operate from experiences of literary canons:

Through either interpretation, our qualitative study fails to confirm the widespread hypothesis that a literary style elicits more empathy than a more popular one, suggesting instead that it elicits a more aesthetically distanced reading (p. 149).

The other major finding is the emergence of distant reading as a receptive means within the readers' habits and as a tacit pledge for its use as a practical method in the study of readers' responses.

The aforementioned works validate the feasibility of such studies on readers' responses and their sentiments. These works are, indeed, teachings on the way readers' response can be utilized as a corpus of sentiment and a firm ascertainment that Distant Reading can unveil cognitive features that are unfolded within these emotions. The theoretical and methodological frameworks (at this stage) shape an aggregate of fragmented propositions that will be shaped into a homogenous approach to the study of cognitive dissonance (through sentiment analysis) within forum-based readers' responses (Distant reading and psychonarratology).

The next section will present the montage of the study of cognitive dissonance within the forum-collected responses of Heinlein's readership. The historical paradigm (subsequent to the film release and the boom Web forums) provides a rationale of the nature of answers and the psychonarratological incidences related to reception and appraisal.

V.3. *Starship Troopers*: distant reading within an interpretive community

Since its debut in 1959, Robert Heinlein's novel *Starship Troopers* has been one of the most popular -- and controversial -- works of science fiction ever published. Written in a few weeks as a response to a proposed nuclear testing moratorium and other issues, it has been interpreted and misinterpreted, praised and excoriated. It recently generated hundreds of "reviews" on the Amazon.com website -- not bad for a book published 38 years previously! (Weuve⁹: 2009)

Christopher Weuve' statement (certainly a fan reader testimony) expresses the effect of the movie adaptation on the novel's reappraisal and its astonishing longevity. Like any notorious author, Heinlein has a faithful readership that had been able to remain

⁹ *Thoughts on Starship Troopers* (Web Page). <http://www.kentaurus.com/troopers.htm>. Last updated 04.07.2009.

faithful to the writer, even when his discourse had drifted towards estranging narratives. As explained earlier, the ‘deviant’ etiquette that qualified Heinlein is mainly (but not solely) due to *Starship Troopers*. That hypothetical form of futurism is indeed a rereading of history with estranging narratives.

Heinlein earned a new community of readers with the film’s release. Though discursively different, the film nurtured the will to discover / rediscover Heinlein’s novel. This readership is made of fan base and antagonists, as well. Stanley Fish (1980) would consider it as an “interpretive community”¹⁰. Much influenced by modern pragmatics (Searle and Austin) Fish, first, theorized readers’ response as written products of interpretive communities:

Interpretive communities are made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions. In other words these strategies exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read rather than, as is usually assumed, the other way around.¹¹ (p. 483).

According to Fish, these readers do not only read, but do produce texts. Later, he reinstated the community’s active role in reception and interpretation. Thus, interpretive communities constantly favored readers-produced-meaning over authorial meaning. Fish (1977; 1980) denies expertise as a perquisite for critical judgment. He assumes that interpretation is innate and that it does not require refined knowledge. Henceforth, any group of readers who share the same mindsets, interpretation strategies, or textual approaches is considered as an interpretive community.

One pending question remains, where to find Heinlein’s interpretive communities? The evident answer consists in looking for readers’ feedbacks on the Web forums. The majority of readers’ responses theories (Purves, Beach, Odell, Fish,

¹⁰ Stanley Fish, *Is There A Text in This Class*, Harvard U. Press. 1980

¹¹ Stanley E. Fish Interpreting the "Variorum" Source: *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Spring, 1976). The University of Chicago Press pp. 465-485

and Cooper) were shaped before the democratization of the Web, and the appearance of online forums. *Starship Troopers*' 'second life' coincided with digital reading and digital responses. Consequently, the readers – in this dissertation – are semi-virtual. By this I mean that they are neither actual classroom readers¹² nor implied readers. In fact, they are assumedly members of Heinlein's readership: an interpretive community united / divided by the film adaptation which revived the 'myth'. This digital criticism possesses its own codes and judgment paradigms, and had the merit (through anonymity) to drag silent / timid / introvert readers to yield judgments or opinions on narrative experiences.

This opinion corpus would serve a double objective. First, it would enable the collection of Heinlein's readers' sentiments, opinions, and responses to *Starship Troopers*. Second, it serves in the detection of reader's cognitive dissonance in their judgment of the novel / author. On the legitimacy of that sort of corpus, I resort to Suvin's claim:

“... Science has since Marx and Einstein become an open ended corpus of knowledge, so that all imaginable new corpuses which do not contravene the philosophical basis of the scientific method in the author's times (for example, the simulsequentialist physics in Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*) can play the role of scientific validation in SF¹³” (p. 68).

Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*' second 'life' was the product of cultural assumptions that disambiguate contemporary readers' perceptions of the book. Consequently, their opinions do constitute a valid corpus of sentiments and judgments and would indicate instances of cognitive dissonance in the reception of the narrative.

¹² The subjects under study in empirical readers' response were generally learners who were given indoors assignments.

¹³ Darko Suvin. *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre*. Yale University Press. 1977

V.4. Sentiments Corpus and Opinion Holders

Are opinions trustable? If no, they may spot crescent tendencies and inflections. Starting from this ascertainment, I started searching for the most referenced Heinlein-related web forums. Opinion mining or sentiment analysis is an analytical, statistical, or qualitative approach to the users' feedback in as such various fields as: marketing, advertisement, social networks ...etc. In this dissertation, the searched opinions or sentiments are the verbalizations made by Heinlein readers which would constitute a corpus of sentiments. Their statements are to express cognitive dissonance on matters of the narrative or their perception of author's ideology. In any forum, there is an opinion holder. Generally, it is the individual who makes the first post; asks the first question, or starts the debate. Opinion holders lead the conversation and attempt to influence judgments.

Scholars and researchers in text mining and sentiments analysis have developed a series of computational approaches to textual analysis. Thus, the 'Appraisal theory' emerged in the course of the study and seemed helpful to scour opinions, appraisal, and, final judgments. As said earlier, Heinlein's narratives (not less than others) continue to stir new interpretations and appraisals. Consequently, interpretive communities were identified around the semantic tags: Heinlein; Starship Troopers; Fascism, and Utopia. The release of sequels¹⁴ and prequels of the first film re-launched critical discussions over the Web. Obviously, it was the first adaptation and the original material that were used as referential landmarks. Thus, I focused on the critiques of the novel, and to a lesser degree those which refer to the 1997 version. I have deliberately avoided the forums that are unstructured, raw, and digressive. Instead, I privileged fan / non fan readers critiques that appealed for readers' appraisal or reprobation.

¹⁴ *Starship Troopers: Marauder* (2008), *Starship Troopers: Invasion* (2012), and *Starship Trooper: Traitor of Mars* (2017).

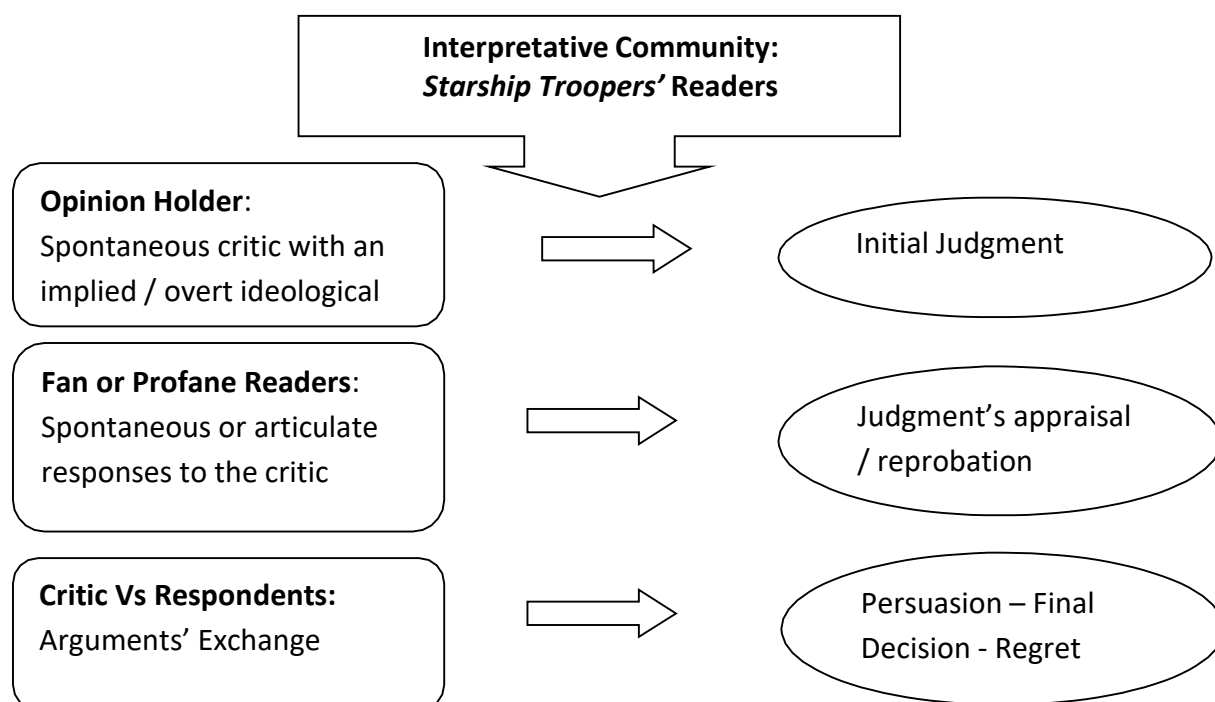


Figure 11: Web Opinion Holders and Readers' Responses Schemas

The above communication scheme aims at identifying the areas of dissonant judgments. The point of interest is to understand how the recipients do manage their potential dissonance. Cognitive dissonance may be identified at different levels of the output. It can be expressed either in morphological structures (contrast connectors) or in lexicon (opposition words), or even in autobiographical digressions. Opinion holders tend to influence their interpretive community with possible dissonant arguments. Within the process of persuasion, the cognitive dissonance of the opinion holder might be transmissible to the rest of the interpretive community. The following section explores cognitive dissonance in Heinlein readers through sentiment analysis of web responses.

V.5. *Starship Troopers*' readers: Corpus design, selection and preparation

Identifying the target in this dissertation was the first phase. The concepts of cognitive and cultural dissonances were tackled in the previous chapter. Heinlein was subjected to a historical and cultural study. The other 'partner' in the literary experience is the

reader. Instead of analyzing the implied reader or the college students, I opted for the semi-virtual reader who posts his responses in web forums. The notion of semi-virtual reader involves ‘actual’ readers evolving in virtual space. Their reading does not obey to classroom assignments, for instance, but rather stems from a deliberate (and conscious) act of self-expression and experience sharing. Occurring in a quasi natural sphere, the reader’s language is generally unbound and uncensored.

The corpus was prepared out of the tags used on search engines and websites’ links. I identified hundreds of forums on Heinlein, and a dozen on *Starship Troopers*. I selected seven websites featuring –alternatively- a preliminary statement, a review, and the readers’ comments. The corpus preparation and selection was inspired from the model of Braunschweiler¹⁵ (2002). The preparation required the predefinition of size, availability, topic coverage, and some formal issues. The selection phase involved the formatting of the texts: namely the deletion of emoticons and non verbal expressions (pictures, sounds ...etc; See figures 12 and 13).



Annotations → Size → Coverage → Style → Availability

Figure 12 : Braunschweiler’s corpus selection steps



Addition / deletion → Format Transformation → Feature
Extraction → Coverage Analysis

Figure 13 : Braunschweiler’s corpus preparation steps

Braunschweiler (2002) recommends the codification of the areas of focus into tokens, acronyms, and abbreviations to render a systematic approach. Further, he advocates the suppression of problematic entries without altering the original text. Consequently, this is what I did in the selection of readers’ statements.

¹⁵Norbert Braunschweiler. *Corpus Design for a Unit Selection Database*. Institute for Natural Language Processing (IMS) Stuttgart 8th/9th October 2002 BITS Workshop, München
<https://www.phonetik.uni-muenchen.de/forschung/BITS/WSBraunschweiler.pdf>

In this part, the most significant statements on the author's / novels fascistic qualifications are extracted and analyzed in terms of cognitive dissonance. The interpretive community's orientations in the debate would indicate dissonant instances, and the readers' attempt to reduce them. All the corollary words associated with 'fascism' are listed according to their use. The expressions denoting discomfort and judgmental difficulties are also compiled into significant indexes on the sentiments of the readers regarding the novel or the author. The datasets are to disambiguate the standpoints with constant references to the opinion context. Regarding word concordance, I used, as a complementary tool, NVIVO 10 Professional Edition Software to establish word occurrence and semantic links' identification.

V.6. Selected Topics and Tags

V.6.1. Opinion context

The found discussions were published after the 1997 movie release and stretch from 2001 to 2017; two decades which witnessed the exit of the US Democrats from the Executive and the arrival of the Neo-Conservatives in the George W. Bush administration. As noted earlier, much of the prophecies on the fascistic tendencies were realized. The book and the movie made readers / viewers experience an epiphany: the belligerence of the USA and the notions of preventive war and dehumanization of the enemy. According to Lieven and Hulsman (2006), the policy led by the Hawks¹⁶ was a revival of The Cold War where the enemy was no longer the Soviets, but Islamic Terrorism¹⁷.

The thematic longevity of the narrative seemed intertwined with US Foreign Policy and its disputable choices. The antagonist film adaptation had forced readers and political observers to read Heinlein retrospectively. Barely disguised regrets of negative judgments were stated, and those who did not appreciate the film reappraised it on the basis of the 'War on Terror'. Unlike the press reviews for the movie (virulent

¹⁶ The Hawks were the closest collaborators of President George W. Bush, in charge of National Defense and Domestic Security, namely: Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney. The Hawks were the theoreticians of the 'War Against Terror', in Iraq and Afghanistan.

¹⁷ See Anatol Lieven and John C. Hulsman. Neo-Conservatives, Liberal Hawks, and the War on Terror Lessons from the Cold War. *World Policy Journal* Vol. 23, No. 3 (Fall, 2006), pp. 64-74. [Duke University Press](#)

before 9/11), the post 9/11 viewers hailed the narrative and semiotic choices of Verhoeven and Neumeier. Indeed, what was estranging for the then-readers / viewers was by now familiar and factual. Post-decision (judgment) regret is a valid diagnosis of cognitive dissonance in the reception and responses to film and fiction narratives.

Within this context, I searched for the major readers' forums on Heinlein's novel. Some of these are raw and unstructured; others are responses to partial opinions. The forums are listed (below) with their identifiers:

V.6.2. Selected Forums

The selected forums have been picked up according to the frequentation size as they are ordered by the research engine. They are meant to provide a large and varied coverage of readers' responses. The selected forum are listed below:

1. How Robert Heinlein Went from Socialist to Right-Wing Libertarian?

Annalee Newitz. 6/09/14.

<https://io9.gizmodo.com/how-robert-heinlein-went-from-socialist-to-libertarian-1588357827>

2. Robert A Heinlein makes fascism seem attractive.

Open Forum 30th January 2017

<https://www.giraffeboards.com/showthread.php?t=43161>

3. I believe that the fascist society presented in Robert Heinlein's book Starship Troopers doesn't seem all that bad CMV (Changed my View)

Archived Forum 2014.

https://www.reddit.com/r/changemyview/comments/1dppjr/i_believe_that_the_fascist_society_presented_in/

4. Straight Dope Message Board. For Sci-Fi fans: Was Robert Heinlein a Fascist?

Straight Dope Message Board 01.05.2001

<http://boards.straightdope.com/sdmb/showthread.php?threadid=53973>

5. Robert A. Heinlein? A Sci-Fi Genius? Or an Old Fascist Pervert?

(Discussion in 'Sci-Fi & Fantasy' started by ScaryMonster, Aug 28, 2009)

<http://www.sciforums.com/threads/robert-a-heinlein-a-sci-fi-genus-or-an-old-fascist-pervert.95760/>

6. Blasting bugs is more complicated than you think

Sam Jordison, Wed 23 Jul '08 12.45 BST First published on Wed 23 Jul '08 12.45 BST

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2008/jul/23/blastingbugsismorecomplicatedthanyouthink>

7. Did Heinlein advocate the apparently militaristic, if not fascist society of Starship Troopers?

StackExchange: Science Fiction and Fantasy (Open forum October 2012 – Feb 2017)

<https://scifi.stackexchange.com/questions/26352/did-heinlein-advocate-the-apparently-militaristic-if-not-fascist-society-of-sta>

These nests of opinions are not affiliated to scholarly or academic institutions. In fact, they represent a spectrum of fan and profane readers need to share their reading experience and debate the question of fascism in Heinlein's narrative. The forums do neither represent the fan base of the writer neither would embellish the reputation of the writer. Their validity is related to the fact that they offer in situ verbal

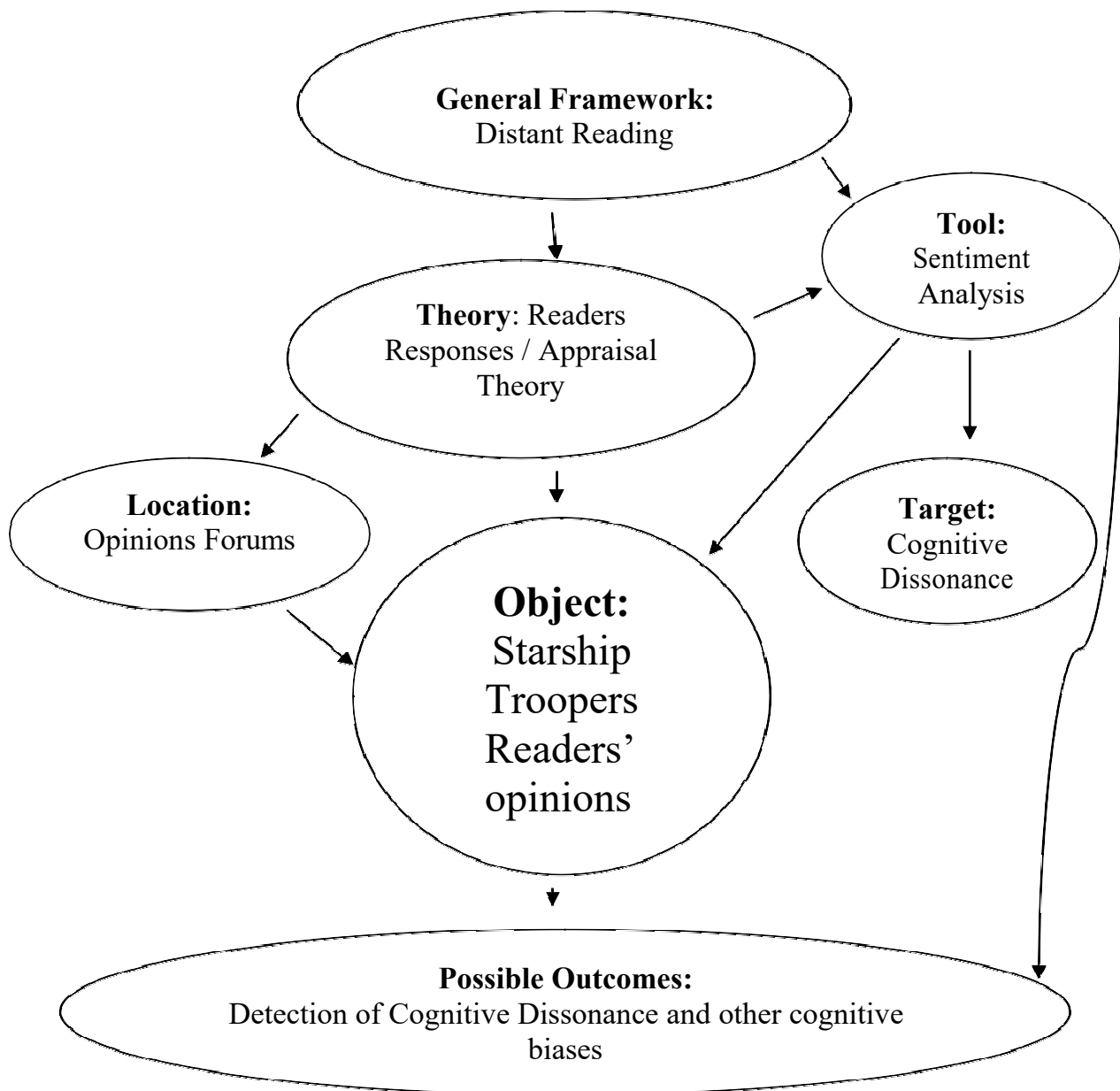
interactions – in which the pro and cons would voice their beliefs and judgments; designs and regrets, and possibility, their resilience.

Conclusion

Cognitive dissonance is primarily a question of opinions and judgments. Resorting to Web forums as a form of interpretive community is likely to enable the observation and analysis of verbal interactions and the appraisal curves. This chapter has set the complementary theoretical and methodological study of readers' response to Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*. Aided by the tools and assets developed within Distant Reading theories and sentiment analysis, the study has taken the direction of digital readers and their feedback.

The incidence of the rise of web forums, as forms of expressions, and the adaptation of the novel by Paul Verhoeven has created interpretive communities with a considerable corpus of opinions which are exploitable in the detection of cognitive dissonance. Hence, the next chapter will present the account of the cognitive dissonance in the reception and responses of Heinlein's readership.

Complementary Theoretical and Methodological Scaffolding



Chapter VI

The Fascist Utopia and cognitive dissonance, a sentiment analysis

Introduction

This chapter accounts for the sentiment analysis of seven discussion forums on Heinlein and *Starship Troopers*. The aim is to provide a concrete overview of actual readers' responses to Heinlein's novel. Seven forums were selected for the purpose of identifying the main expressed beliefs and judgments towards Heinlein's novel, the fascism allegations, and utopian views. The approach alternates Nvivo sentiment analysis reports and manual detailed analytical comments on the readers' responses.

The corpus was analyzed manually in order to sort the most relevant statements regarding the novel, the writer and their appraisal. Then, the full corpora were inputted in the qualitative analysis device and analyzed in regard to two paradigms: themes and standpoints. The thematic analysis and sentiment analysis (positive, negative neutral and mixed) are presented as graphs to provide a visualization of the tendencies. On the other hand, the significant responses are circumscribed within tables with a classification of the tenor of the statements. Finally, a synthesis is presented with additional reference to emerging issues that were not anticipated.

VI.1.1. Interpretive community 1: Heinlein's Political Affiliation

How Robert Heinlein Went from Socialist to Right-Wing Libertarian? (Opinion Holder: Annalee Newitz)

For the opinion holder, Annalee Newitz, *Starship Troopers* is a mid-life crisis. This discussion revolves around the author with reference to *Starship Troopers*. The opinion holder exposes the author's political transformations and further quotes Heinlein who admits that he never really changed his political views; it was rather his recipients who changed their positions.

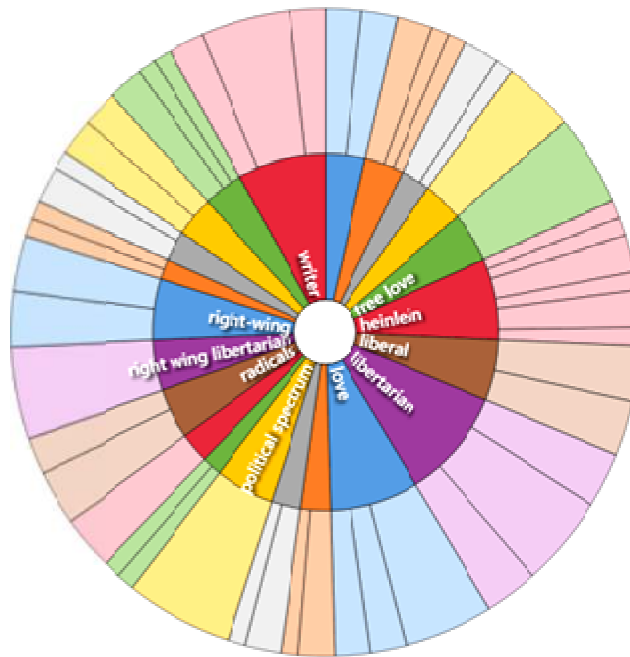


Figure14: Thematic content – IC 1

Heer the biographer of Heinlein : Radical Liberal
Heinlein slide from left to right
Heinlein openness on sexuality
Heinlein was influenced by his second wife
Heinlein's pressure on the Democratic Party to move to the left
Heinlein was interested in Eugenics and Malthusian
Heinlein lamented Modernity

No definite opinion: The opinion holder makes digressions on Heinlein's libertinage and travels. She considered *Starship Troopers* as a mid-life crisis in Heinlein's oeuvre.

Readers

Libertarianism is not “right wing”
One thing that people seem to miss about Starship Troopers (...) is it’s actually pro-democracy
I think Heinlein may well have moved somewhat towards the “right” but I personally Believe the left-right dichotomy is something of a fictional one.
All his books encourage people to won their actions and not blame them on government or anybody else.
I never got the impression was pro-fascist at all. Other than flogging and the exclusive enfranchisement of actively serving military members, what else makes it fascist?
The novels is xenophobic (But open to non-white minorities) / Heinlein was a staunch opponent of religious demagoguery
Wikipedia says that the novel was based on a clearly racist short story by Campbell.

Readers made digressions towards racism. They denied the fascist allegations and diminished military conscription as a form of fascism. The word Utopia does not appear. Instead, readers express their belief that Heinlein is a right-wing and somehow xenophobic. Readers used autobiographical digressions to speak about the novel / author and generally presented neutrality in judgments.



Figure 15: Readers' responses – IC 1

VI.1.2. Interpretive community 2: the glamorization of fascism – biased judgments

Robert A Heinlein makes fascism seem attractive (Giraffe Board).

No Opinion Holder (readers and viewers debate on RAH)

In this open forum a biased stand point sets the tone: Heinlein is guilty of fascism and the incriminated novel is *Starship Troopers*. The first exchanges on the topic highlighted the concept of ‘Fascist Utopia’. Opinions are supported with references to *Starship Troopers* and *Fear No Evil*.

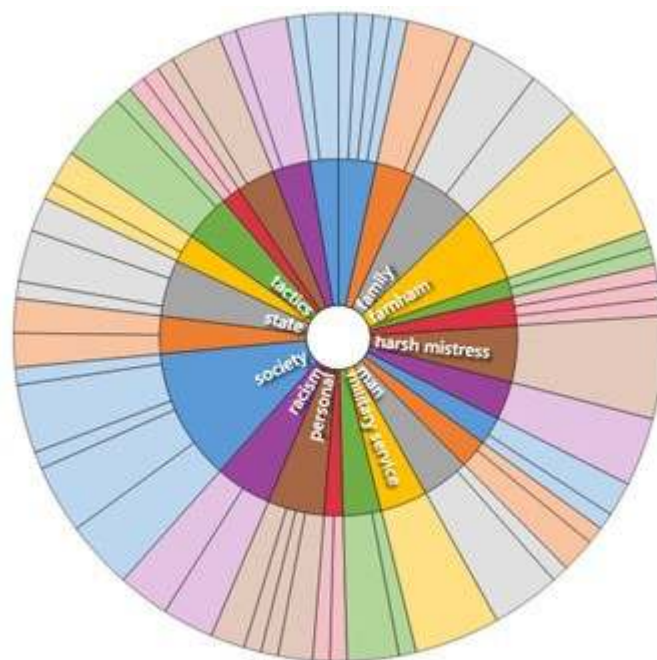


Figure 16: Thematic Content – IC 2

I think he makes fascism look more attractive and plutocracy perfectly fine. *Fear No Evil* has an interesting “F**k the poor” vibe to it. *Starship Troopers* describes a fascist utopia where only veterans can vote. **(Frontal Judgment)**

I have conducted a study of Heinlein that is not -- shall we say -- unintensive, and found that he was marketing his political ideology to the rubes to make money. **(Frontal Judgment)**

Heinlein liked playing with government models. You had a UN style bureaucracy in *Star Beast* where the mid-level civil servants were the good guys. He had an absolute unbreakable tyranny in *Glory Road* (where Star, emperess of 40 galaxies could say "I find that star's position in space unaesthetic. Remove it." and it would be destroyed.

He had a burgeoning Libertopia in *Moon is a Harsh Mistress* that utterly and

completely collapsed into a hellhole 20 years later in *The Cat Who Walked Through Walls*.

He had another libertopia in the short story "Coventry" (which followed a theocracy in "...if This Goes On") and again, the libertopia collapsed the next story ("Methusalah's Children")

He had a benevolent (sorta) tyranny where circumpolar nukes were orbiting the earth. Ready to drop on any nation that misbehaved. It was run by GOOD MEN, but even in the '40s he speculated that it might not always be that.

In Double-Star he had a very JFK-esque democracy.

Heinlein loved playing with governments, but I think you'd be hard pressed to figure out what exactly he wanted

Except slavery. Every non-bad guy who discusses slavery is 100% against.

(Unconditional Supporter)

The last reader's response is an ultra-referenced analysis with the inclusion of the term libertopia (liberty and utopia). This reader methodically refers to Heinlein's novels and attempts to highlight the most imprecise aspects of his thematic obsessions.

Starship Troopers is by no means a utopia, though whether you call it fascist or not is up to you. It's true that only veterans can vote, but non-vets are by no means second-class citizens in terms of any other rights, and the franchise is seen as much as a responsibility as a right.

Heinlein's an agreeable writer some of the time - I've not read anything like all of his work, including *Fear No Evil* - and sometimes a budding writer has been fortunate enough to be compared to him, but it's a mistake to read too much into any science-fiction writer's work. Otherwise you end up basing your life philosophy on *Gor* and people just look at you funny.

(Comparison and contrast).

But whoever is saying that he made *fascism seem attractive*, based on how some might interpret one or two of his works, is playing with alternative facts **(Tempering Judgments)**.

In his novels, Heinlein took whatever political position that would make a good story. IRL, he seems to have been a mainstream conservative who was respectful of other viewpoints (he'd argue with you about them, but didn't think you were his enemy). Those who knew him say he'd be appalled at the right wing today. **(Redefinition into Friendly Fascism)**

The rest of the conversation does not support fascist accusations. Yet the fan reader's referenced analysis of Heinlein's works did not inflect other readers' beliefs. Recipients still manage to substitute the word fascist / fascism with right-wing political orientations. They often relocate the writer in his historical perspective and temper the

tenor of his discourse. The tepidity of answers indicates the readers' inability to formulate a clear statement on their appraisal of the writer and the target novel.

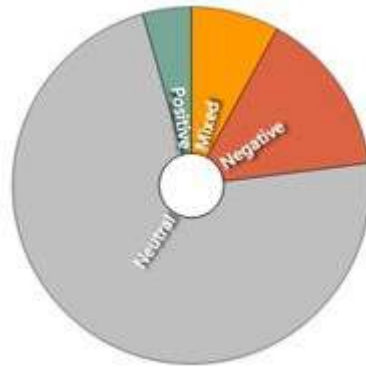


Figure 17 : readers responses – IC 2

VI.1.3. Interpretive community 3: Belief change and moral judgments

I believe that the fascist society presented in Robert Heinlein's book Starship Troopers doesn't seem all that bad CMV (Changed my View)

No Opinion Holder

This forum was designed for people who changed their views. Utterly in the questions of decision, this form matches the expectations of finding cognitive dissonance at the level of change belief and post-decision regrets. The participants constantly make reference to their gender as readers: I m a man; I am a woman; touch my gender...etc. The opinion holder is omnisciently attempting to reconcile the paradox of a fascist state with happiness and bliss.

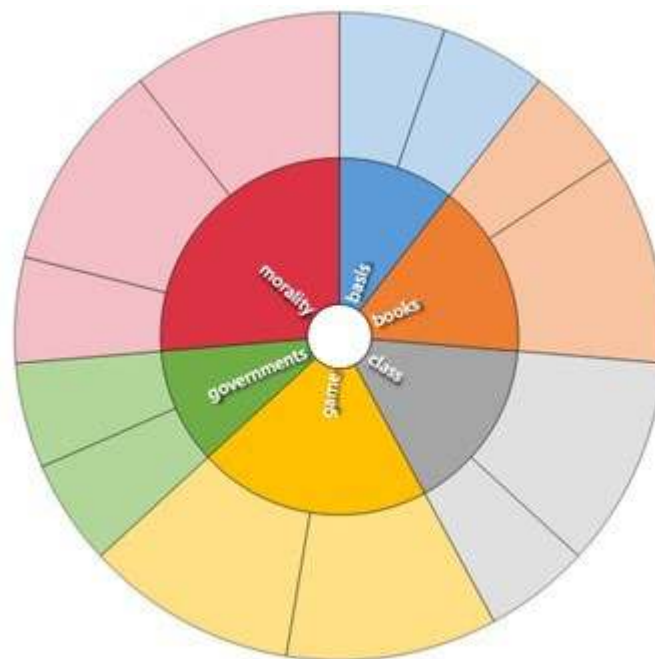


Figure 18: Thematic content – IC 3

The mathematical morality seemed a bit idealistic to me, but appealed to me because I look at things in a cut and dry manner. **(Judgmental complexity).**

Psychological studies have shown that corporal punishment doesn't teach children morality, it only teaches them to try harder and not get caught. **(Digression).**

Not to mention it's also very thin anti-communist propaganda. (Utopian world that's highly militarized and just so happens to be very Western vs. thought-sharing bugs.). **(Semantic Redefinition).**

I have read very little about moral philosophy an am a man. And also fairly naïve about how the world works, so that probably had a large part to play in my perception of the book. **(Autobiographical Digression).**

That's only if you're on the right "side" of fascism. Because all the other sides will

get murdered. That's why the film of Starship Troopers by Paul Verhoeven was a satire against fascism. **(Defense of the movie).**

Which is exactly what war propaganda is supposed to do: dehumanize the enemy, so that they appear to be below your soldiers. **(Fascism firm accusations).**

I have only seen the movie, but I have read the synopsis of the book. In the movie and the book, the citizens are happy /satisfied with their life and the system works for humanity. In reality the system works and makes people satisfied is desirable. **(populist argument)**

Would the book's non-corrupt pseudo-fascist evidence-based-policy government work in our world? I believe you should change your view from an iffy "seems good" stance to an indifferent stance because society is immensely complex and it's best to rely on historical precedent when evaluating fictional governments. In recorded history, there has not been a fascist state that has long term stability and a middle class majority. **(Dissonant and contradictory comment)**

Though they do not make autobiographical digressions, readers are mixed and their opinions are contrasted. The two last comments belong to the same recipient. That reader believes that if people living under fascist rule are happy, there is no need to question its legitimacy. He exhorts other readers to change their beliefs on the basis of a historical pitch.



Figure 19: readers' responses – IC 3

VI.1.4. Interpretive community 4 : uncertainty and questioning

Straight Dope Message Board. For Sci-Fi fans: Was Robert Heinlein a Fascist? No Opinion Holder

This long forum is also biased. It is made of longer and more structured statements involving a series of confrontations between Heinlein fans and his antagonists. For the writer's opponents, if Heinlein had sinned only one time, it was unforgivable. The Heinlein fan readers (who do not always assume their status) use second degree and irony to downsize the tenor of the fascism apology. There are three types of standpoints: negative, positive and neutral.

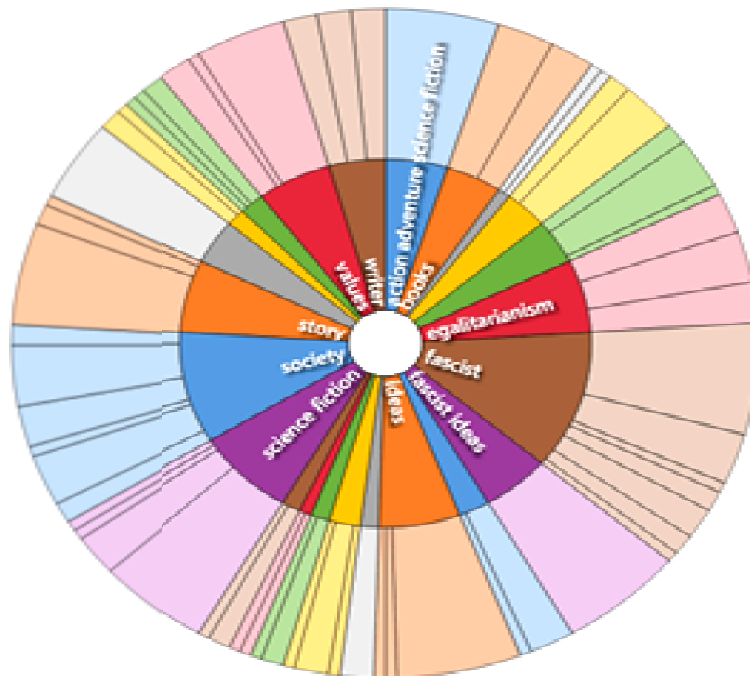


Figure 20: Thematic content – IC 4

Anti Heinlein

The one I really dislike, Robert Heinlein, seems to be a fascist. Just look at “Stranger in A Strange Land,” “Starship Troopers,” ”Farnham’s Freehold”... Was Heinlein an escaped German who came over here after the war to put some blood and iron into our sci-fi? I wouldn’t be a bit surprised.

By the way, Heinlein defenders – How come nobody is mentioning Farnham’s Freehold?

Heinlein was definitely making a statement by publishing that book at that time, and I don’t like what he was saying. Heinlein was definitely no innocent “creature of his time.” How could a “libertarian” who believed in the individual freedom be so historically deterministic anyway? ... He was a creepy right-wing racist because he

CHOSE to be, not 'cuz he was ign'ant.
Since we're getting into specific definitions here, and since someone pointed out that "fascist" is sometimes overused, and I have seen no evidence that Heinlein believed in the "organic state" or "class collaboration" ... OK, OK, I'll drop the accusation of fascism, IF you all agree that Heinlein was racist. That was the worst part of fascism anyway ... the hating and stuff. To get from right-wing to fascist, all you need is hate.
If Hitler wrote Sci-Fi it would read like a RAH story
OK, let's substitute "racist" for "fascist"
I was just about to bring up that facism != racism, when you conceded the point. Great!

The anti-Heinlein readers put forward the excessive militarism of *Starship Troopers* and the racist overtones of *Farnham's Freehold*. Their answers are consistent and do not contain contradictions. The observed tendency is confirmed, readers make digressions on the ethnic considerations and depart from the political choices of the author. The most 'violent' judgment is stated by a reader who compares Heinlein to Hitler. This statement would stir the most referenced answers from the Heinlein readership.

Pro Heinlein

The heated arguments on the author's reputation most often led his defenders to show their loyalty to the writer and deployed their craft to dilute the talk and reorient the debate on his other 'progressive' works.

Right-wing? Certainly. Sex-maniacal in his later works, yes. Fascist? Hm. His Sixth Sense (about an Asian invasion of the USA) has a lot of racism overtones, but on the other hand, he clearly attacked racism in his <i>The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress</i> . (Contrast)
Yes, he can be militaristic, but that is very different from being fascist. (Inconsistency)
Before pronouncing Heinlein a fascist, read more than two or three of his books... fascism suppresses the rights of the individual. No Heinlein protagonist is any kind of oppressor. (Partial denial)
Heinlein has been credited with being one of the first great libertarian authors and wrote in 1946 a book called "Take Back Your Government!" (Published much later in the 90s) which was a manifesto for political activism in the common man... / Yes in many ways his words are sexist and bigoted by today's standards and demonstrate a visible prejudice. Hey guess what, people in his generation were brought up to think certain things and no one told them otherwise. / I apologize if I come off harsh but I do not take well to people insulting someone I admire as much as RAH offhandedly and without doing the simple courtesy of reading the man's work. (Digression)

For a counter-example to “Starship Troopers,” read “If This Goes On---” – Heinlein’s novella of army officers rebelling against a theocracy that’s taken over the US and reinstating a democratic government based on individual rights – hardly a fascist theme. I’d go with the analysis that he was a libertarian who experienced personal growth on race issues. **(Rationalization)**

At the risk of incurring the wrath of all, I don’t think Heinlein was a racist or a fascist or a sexist.... The movie is a fascinating perversion of the book. And I don’t assume that the book represents Heinlein’s political views. **(De-dramatizing the book’s overtone)**

Readers’ replies to the previous attacks are regularly inconsistent. The highlighted items, above, indicate the type of justification to their dissonant conditions. In the next set of responses, there is a shift from logical argumentation to the socio-cultural explication:

So using the books is pointless. Heinlein’s nonfiction seems to indicate he was pretty much a Libertarian / Heinlein cannot be expected to act like someone living in 2001. **(Historical Argument)**

As for the future where blacks become the dominant race; wake up already! This was Heinlein’s clear message to white- supremacists, as subtle as a brick in the face: “Racial supremacy is good? Let’s see how you like it when it’s happening to you, eh? Don’t like it so much now, do you” **(Reverse psychology arguments).**

He was aware of cultural differences, but considered them unimportant ... people from different cultures are supposed to be fundamentally and permanently estranged. **(Estrangement argument)**

As to fascism ... so many people have tried to prove that Heinlein is a fascist using *Starship Troopers*... The only conclusion I’ve ever seen is that Heinlein’s not a fascist; the society of *Starship Troopers* is what could happen and, regardless of its philosophy, not necessarily consistent directly with Heinlein’s beliefs. **(Allusion to Heinlein’s potential dissonance)**

RAH emphasizes that one of the biggest differences between the humans and the arachnids is that humans will save injured humans, the arachnids just abandon injured arachnids. Interestingly, the political philosophy that guides the Moon rebels is quite different from that of “Starship Troopers” ... even though the community cannot put its interests ahead of individuals, the individuals can freely decide to subordinate their interests to that of the community. ... The Moon society is libertarian, the Starship Troopers society is communitarian, but both emphasize the concept of individuality and responsibility **(Approximation and paradox)**

One more thing, Sometimes people who read Heinlein’s later books can’t understand why he is regarded as such a great writer. .. I would say that his early “Juveniles” are the reason we love him. **(Comparison)**

Here, recipients pointed the fact that *Starship Troopers* does not sum the beliefs of Heinlein, and that his other narratives are clearly different in tone and orientations. Readers seem to dissociate *Starship Troopers* from the rest of his works. The dissonance factor lies in their attempt to link thematically opposed directions in what seems apparently irreconcilable: authoritarianism and anarchism.

The progression of the debate incited pro-Heinlein readers to reuse euphemism in the description of the supposed fascism of the novel. Some insisted on Heinlein's conservatism while others support the idea that Heinlein has evolved since the 1950s on matters of race and gender.

I Thought that the philosophy and story in Starship Troopers was the important part, not how many blacks there were, or whether or not women are better star pilots.

(Lessening fascism with anti-racism / anti-sexism claims)

Heinlein wasn't a fascist, and although he has undoubtedly inspired millions of libertarians, I don't think he would have been comfortable calling himself a libertarian either. I believe that Heinlein was essentially a Goldwater conservative (**Digressive reference to the founder and theoretician of modern American Conservatism Barry Goldwater**)

In fact if you read his work you will see that he grew as a human being. The problem you seem to have is that you pick up something written by a human in 1964 (Freehold) and then fail to read something written 87' (Sail Beyond the Sunset) so you don't get to see that he was a man who learned and changed his own perspective.

(Maturation argument)

I would imagine that if Hitler wrote Sci Fi, the main character's name wouldn't be Juan Rico. Just one little difference off the top of my head. **(Anti-racism argument)**

Look, Heinlein didn't live in the days when people believed in a flat Earth. He lived in the MIDDLE TO LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY, so you can't blame it on the times he lived in. He was alive for a goodly portion of my own life, and I'm only 35.

(Autobiographical digression)

Current critics have their own biases in these matters and unconsciously assume that the books were written according to 21st Century values. It's the same issue with sexism -- Heinlein cannot be expected to act like someone living in 2001 (that's Clarke's job). The most you can say from a reading of the text is "under current assumptions and biases, Heinlein's work gives the impression of racism/sexism." However that tells nothing about Heinlein or his intentions. **(Critical bias argument)**

Personally, I find the govt. setup in Starship Troopers to be a pretty cool idea: only the people who give up 2 years of their life to serve their country (not necessarily in the military, either) are allowed to vote and run said country--having shown themselves to be at least marginally selfless. **(Personal statement and subjectivity)**

In this part, readers endeavor to root the belief that Heinlein's novel does not endorse the fascistic themes in his narrative. In saying so, readers acknowledge the fact that the novel is ambiguous, if not crypto-fascist. Those who dismiss *Starship Troopers* refer to Heinlein's harshest critics who have never accused him of racism. A reader refers to the sense of otherness Heinlein held towards the aliens and his unsystematic portrayal of non-humans: aliens are not always portrayed as monsters and might be benevolent.

Look, I'm not coming at you from the perspective of a big RAH fan (though I am one). I'm just trying to point out the irrationality of your argument. You admit that you don't know much about a man's life and that you haven't read anything close to the totality of his work, then you label him a racist. Did you read the works written by his critics? You know, people like George Edgar Slusser, Alexei Panshin, Howard Bruce Franklin, Thomas D. Clareson, Leon E. Stover and others? **(The unconditional fan expertise)**

And yes, in "Starship Troopers" the aliens are indistinguishable bugs. But RAH also had aliens that were humane and friendly **(contrast and comparison)**

As to fascism... So many people have tried to prove that Heinlein is a fascist using *Starship Troopers* that the question is part of the alt.fan.heinlein FAQ. Learned essays have been written on the subject. The only conclusion I've ever seen is that Heinlein's not a fascist; the society of *Starship Troopers* is an example of what could happen and, regardless of its philosophy, not necessarily consistent directly with Heinlein's beliefs. **(Author /narrator contrast)**

The moon society is libertarian, the *Starship Troopers* society is communitarian, but both emphasize the concept of individuality and responsibility - and RAH writes approvingly of both. Which suggests that he was a great writer who could build different societies and make them appealing. **(contrastive synthesis and justification)**

In the last post, a reader introduced Heinlein as gay-friendly and open-minded on gender-related issues. This reader associated homophobia with fascism, and in his view, the writer was extremely progressive in regard to his time and the then-values.

Having said that, I still never got any of these rascist/fascist/sexist/whatever vibes while reading Heinlein. I do understand that he was a product of his time (the mid 20th century). **(Contextual / circumstantial argument)**

On a tangential subject, another amazing thing about Heinlein, considering his time and background, is the extremely tolerant attitude he had toward homosexuality. This is most apparent in *The Number of the Beast*, *Time Enough For Love*, and *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls*. It's fairly apparent that he hadn't glommed onto the idea of "orientation," he apparently imagined that homosexuality was a choice, but in no way was it a choice he disapproved of. And that put him leagues ahead of the contemporary thinking that homosexuality was a mental disease. **(Pioneering gay-friendliness argument)**

Granted, homophobia is not necessarily an integral requirement for fascism, so pointing out Heinlein's tolerance of homosexuality does not directly refute charges of fascism. But certainly homophobia has been characteristic of fascist movements throughout this century, notably Nazism, and Heinlein had no truck with such nonsense. **(anti-homophobic argument)**

Neutral

Few neutral positions were noted. Heinlein does not seem to make readers indifferent. The two neutral comments were mostly digressions on the film version (first post) and some improvised reaction to the narrative's overtone (second post).

I didn't read "Starship Troopers," just saw the movie. But the future society, constructed after the "failure of democracy," bases citizenship on military service, and more than one reviewer commented on the Gestapo-like intelligence uniforms and the Holocaust-era tactic of classifying society's enemies as "bugs" or other vermin. **(Judgment of the film not the book)**

"Tyranny of the weak" is a good Fascist slogan. **(Conservative readers' loath of liberals)**

This forum posed the question of the reliability of narrative markers. Heinlein defenders wonder if the color of protagonists and the color of political ideas are sufficient to establish a reputation. Cognitive dissonance is regularly observed within their answers and effort justification. They often fall in contradictions in either denying the fascistic themes or tempering them with reference to his other consensual works.

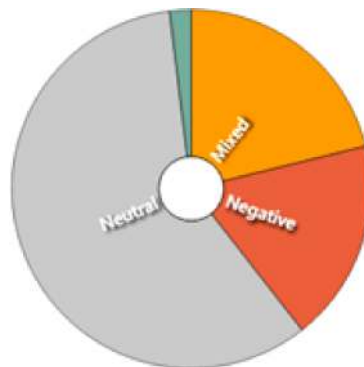


Figure 21: Readers' responses – IC 4

VI.1.5. Interpretive community 5: Heinlein's talent and potential deviancy

Robert A. Heinlein? A Sci-Fi Genius? Or an Old Fascist Pervert? No Opinion Holder

In this forum, readers question the thinking lines of Robert Heinlein - with two possible answers: genius or perversity. Again, readers associate less Heinlein with fascism than with racism. Some make comments on the *Starship Troopers* political system.

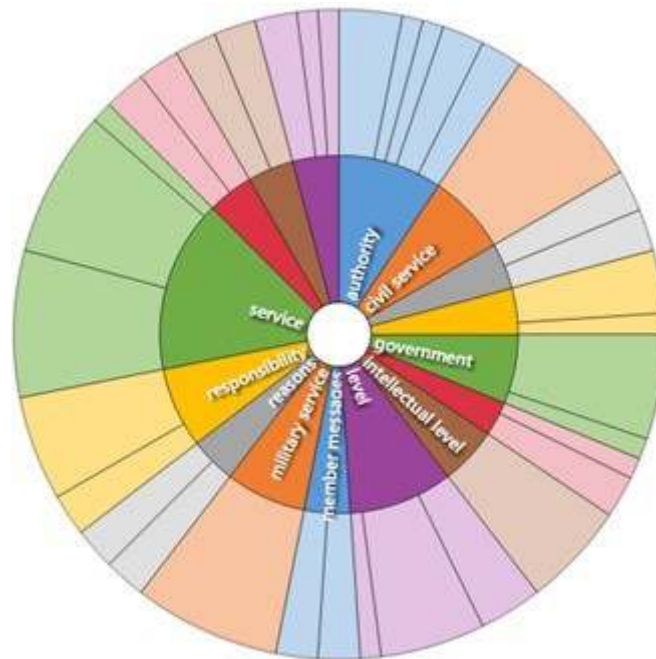


Figure 22: Thematic content – IC 5

In he's science fiction stories he's said things like democracy is doomed to fail and you would have to be a fool to believe in it anyway, benevolent dictatorship is the only way to get and it's okay to root anything on legs as long as its attractive. Or at least that's how it came across to me.

Now "Starship Troopers", was a really good book and the movie version was just mad, the insane Fascism that Paul Verhoeven sends up so well in the movie is also seen in the book although in the book I can't be too sure if Heinlein is really seriously saying that a world Military Government is good? / Remember "Starship Troopers", was originally written for kids! Substitute "Starship" for "Storm" maybe?. **(Blame on the film)**

I know the fascist ideology in the movie was a send up, what I'm saying is that in the book its hard to tell if the authors being serious or not. ... I can't believe not one on this forum has any opinion on this, tell me my reasoning is wrong I can take it! **(doubt)**

I have never really understood why people think that the government in "starship

troopers" was a dictatorship, fascist, etc. So far as I remember, they live in a democracy where you have to do public service (which can be military, but doesn't have to be) to get a vote. The rights of non-voters seem to be protected and respected (they just don't get to vote or run for office). Also, Heinlein featured many different kinds of government in his books. The Moon is a Harsh Mistress was a total libertarian anarchy, which is about as far from a dictatorship as you can get (**disgrace for the civilians**)

Readers' arguments in favor of the novel are referenced from the narrative. It is suggested that average people cannot be granted unlimited freedom, and that suffrage (for all) can be a double edged weapon. What is criticized is not the novel's content, but rather how average readers perceive it.

As for Heinlein's Starship Troopers being fascist, I didn't say it was or that it was his personal belief. Only that Starship Troopers the movie unashamedly implies it (sends it up), and the book says that military or civil service as the only way of gaining the right to vote.

This is a quote from Starship Troopers the book, can you see any holes in the reasoning regarding this fictional system of government from Chapter 12. / The unlimited democracies were unstable because their citizens were not responsible for the fashion in which they exerted their sovereign authority ...other than through the tragic logic of history. The unique 'poll tax' that we must pay was unheard of. No attempt was made to determine whether, a voter was socially responsible to the extent of his literally unlimited authority. If he voted the impossible, the disastrous possible happened instead --and responsibility was, then forced on him willy-nilly and destroyed both him and his foundationless temple. (**discrediting average people wisdom**)

I always found Heinlein's choice to explore the variety of possible future political systems and argue for them severally to be one of the factors that set him in the higher echelons of s/f writers. I also always found the arguments in Starship Troopers particularly attractive.

You express concern over how a child might interpret the story. I suggest a child would probably not be that interested in the distribution of voting franchises in society, but if he took any grand idea away from the book it would be that he should endeavor to do something for others rather than just asking to be looked after. (**Digressive comments on young readership**)

In this part, Heinlein fans declare that he is not the 'greatest' writer ever, but they acknowledge his craft in manufacturing social and political universes that stimulating thinking and self-projection. The leitmotiv of the talented political writer is taken back by other readers:

Yes I agree with you on that one, other writers might have been stylistically superior to Robert Heinlein, be he did but a lot of sociological depth into his stories.

Reading them now you tend to forget how original some of these concepts were when he first wrote them. **(Rehabilitation of Heinlein as a sociologist with less aesthetic craft –fiction- and more talented in philosophical values –non-fiction-)**

Kids find the idea of authoritarianism and punitive justice highly attractive if they are not on the receiving end of it. Remember the Hitler Youth? A child reading SST would be attracted to the idea of military service, so its working as a recruiting poster and by virtue of that acceptance conclude that the military or in the books case that it would be good if the ex-military controlled the government. You can talk semantics about how Heinlein says that any form of public service can get you the right to vote, a child would not differentiate that much. **(Allusion to Hitler Youth)**

I'm a huge Heinlein fan, and Starship Troopers (the book, not the movie) isn't nearly as fascist as some people seem to think it is. Aside from military service being a requirement for citizenship - a policy that makes a certain amount of sense, even though I don't agree with it - the population seems to enjoy the same freedoms as people living in civilized nations today. The non-citizens in the book apparently had all the rights and privileges enjoyed by citizens other than the right to vote. Overall, though, the book touched on a few social/domestic issues, but it was mostly an explanation of how and why a military should work. **(Dissonance in judgment: the disagreeing fan)**

I think that some people may be confusing being pro-military (which Heinlein is) with being pro-big government (which Heinlein certainly did not seem to be, judging by his entire body of work. **(Cognitive dissonance in de-dramatization)**

He wasn't pro-military per se.

He seemed to hold the view that to be a part of the shaping of government policy (i.e. to vote) you couldn't just be an apathetic - but had to demonstrate your willingness to do something for your society - be it military service, civil service etc (Cognitive dissonance) / Incestuous relationships, of which he wrote about, were not necessarily what he promoted or condoned **(the being of this time)**

He makes you think about such topics and writes them in a way, so casually, that many might misinterpret as being his own personal views as being acceptable on a practical level in today's society. ... He is not the best writer I have read, but he is thought provoking, and many of his stories are entertaining at the same time. **(Bias in judgment: not the best but entertaining)**

In their management of their paradoxes and inner conflicts, readers 'higgledy-piggledy' allude to Nazi youth and extreme nationalism. Nevertheless, they do not formulate negative judgments on Heinlein's work. Instead, they operate a semantic slide in naming and renaming the novel's content in every word, except fascism.

The last section of the forum comprises mixed to negative reviews of the book, and the usual contextualization of the writer in his time.

I can't find it online at the moment, but a long time ago I recall reading an interview with Heinlein where he said he wished he had made a bigger deal out of the types of non-military service that a person could do to gain citizenship when he wrote ST, because he thought people often got the wrong idea about it. ... Given that the book was written in 1959, that was pretty progressive for the time. **(Contextual Relativism)**

I don't know? Some of the propaganda was pretty over the top, but it was mostly based on US WW2 propaganda. I still like that movie it's a shame the sequels were so crappy. **(Movie defense)**

I'd say that he was legitimately pro-military, but not to the point of being nutty about it. He showed an obvious respect for the loyalty and necessity of the military to any free society, but you're right that he didn't portray non-military members as worthless leeches or anything. **(Fact denial)**

Although there is no blatant confrontation in this forum (like in the previous), no consensus is found in the readers' exchanges. Readers did not tackle frontally the question of fascism in the book. They attribute the allegations to the perverted adaptation, the misunderstanding of the author's intention, or the ambiguity of concepts' naming and use.



Figure 23: readers' responses – IC 5

VI.1.6. Interpretive community 6: the Hidden Complexity

Blasting bugs is more complicated than you think Opinion Holder (Sam Jordison)

Sam Jordison's review of the book composed this forum. The responses were. The opinion holder makes a series of assertive personal statements on *Starship Troopers*. The worth mentioning thing in Jordison's paper is the opening sentence associating *Starship Troopers* to fascism.



Figure 24: Thematic content – IC 6

There's a law on science fiction blogs stating that there is probability of one that the words Robert Heinlein and *Starship Troopers* will be followed by the word 'fascist'. Certainly, I've been unable to resist the compulsion even if I'm not as sure as some that the 1960 Hugo winner is an apologia for military dictatorship and institutional racism.

This statement is a confirmation of Godwin's law which does apply for non-fascism oriented discussions. Jordison bestowed a personal perception of the novel and hailed the film version as splendid. The opinion holder interprets the narrative as a parable on communism:

But, splendid as the film may be, it shouldn't be taken as a true reflection of the book. Heinlein's position is far more complex, even if no less bonkers for that. The book is a

paean to blowing shit up, shot through with anti Marxist rhetoric and featuring an insect enemy whose hive mind and military tactic of sacrificing individuals for the good of the many could be seen as the apotheosis of communism. **(Book' defense over the simplicity of the film)**

It's also perhaps over-simplistic to say that Heinlein himself 100 per cent approved of the fundamentals of this future utopia. The text isn't without ambiguity (although some of the contradictions might easily be credited to the speed at which it was written) and there's an independent first-person narrator who shouldn't just be seen as a mouthpiece of the author, even if he might not have much in the way of character. **(Justification of the book's content by the conditions of its creation)**

Jordison continues his exposé by explaining the political organization of the novel and links the utopian construct with militarism and pro-military education:

But there's more to Starship Troopers than a simple rebuff to those Cold War peaceniks, and its continuing ability to provoke debate rests as much with Heinlein's strange and vividly described utopian ideas as his gung-ho militarism. The novel is set in a society 5,000 years in the future, where only those who have completed a fixed term of military service are allowed to vote and where teachers tell their pupils (in direct opposition to Wilfred Owen) that: "the noblest fate that a man can endure is to place his own mortal body between his loved home and war's desolation." **(Moral relativism)**

This model, according to the opinion holder, is progressive, safe, and comfortable.

The result is a world that is stable, crime-free and technologically advanced. It's a discomfiting and provocative challenge to anyone who doesn't believe that might is a moral absolute. Even so, it's probably over-simplistic to brand this society as plain fascist. Heinlein is an equal opportunities militarist. **(No certainty in this affirmation)**

The opinion holder seems unsure about his statements. He acknowledges that the narrative is ambiguous but introduced an unusual argument to defend Heinlein. For him, he wrote the book too hastily, and did not necessarily realize the weight of his ideas. This attempt of clearance is enhanced by Heinlein's choice of lessening the role of characters over the amplification of political and philosophical ideas:

This one-dimensional storyteller is Juan Rico The various strata of the military, its ranking systems and customs are described with fetishistic detail and in a manner weird enough alone to get 'fascist' sensors pinging These come courtesy of a handful of other characters equally as one-dimensional as the narrator, who seem to exist only to spout philosophy. **(Flat characters serving great ideas)**

Heinlein's choice uses flat instead of round characters seems to indicate that he was more concerned with a political message than with individualities. The characters are selfless and not encouraged to emerge out of the masses.

In spite of these longueurs, Starship Troopers is compelling reading. And it's not just the difficult nature Heinlein's politics that makes it so. There's a force to much of the writing and a clarity of vision that elevate this book far above other equally rightwing tracts that have long since been forgotten. It remains challenging even 50 years after publication because it also remains alive and compelling. For most liberals it may present the fascination of the abomination - but it's fascination, nonetheless. **(unconditional appraisal)**

The opinion holder does not provide a clear statement on his own sentiment. Torn between his fascination for the book and a noticeable discomfort regarding its content, the reviewer acknowledges the complexity of the book, as well as the writer's capacity to maintain a debate over the narrative that dates back to the 1950s. Fascination prevails over repulsion.

Only two replies were recorded. The readers were evasive and digressive

I don't think it helps that the movie was so bad. **(Digression)**

Have you seen the film? I wouldn't call it bad by any means... crazed and unsubtle, yes, but not bad. It's hilarious and often quite inspired. The climactic joyful cry of "It's afraid!" is a moment of genius. **(Digression)**

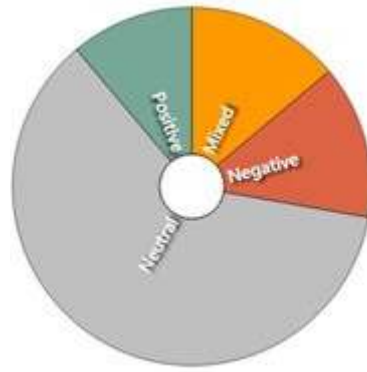


Figure 25: Readers' responses – IC 6

VI.1.7. Interpretive community 7: The aficionados' judgments

Did Heinlein advocate the apparently militaristic, if not fascist society of *Starship Troopers*?

No Opinion Holder

This forum is self-described as designed for SF enthusiasts. The anchor question is on Heinlein's standpoint in *Starship Troopers*. Readers often made a comparison to Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and other Heinlein works. The result is a heated debate over militarism. There is no opinion holder in this forum, but the usual standpoints of defenders, opponents and neutral readers.

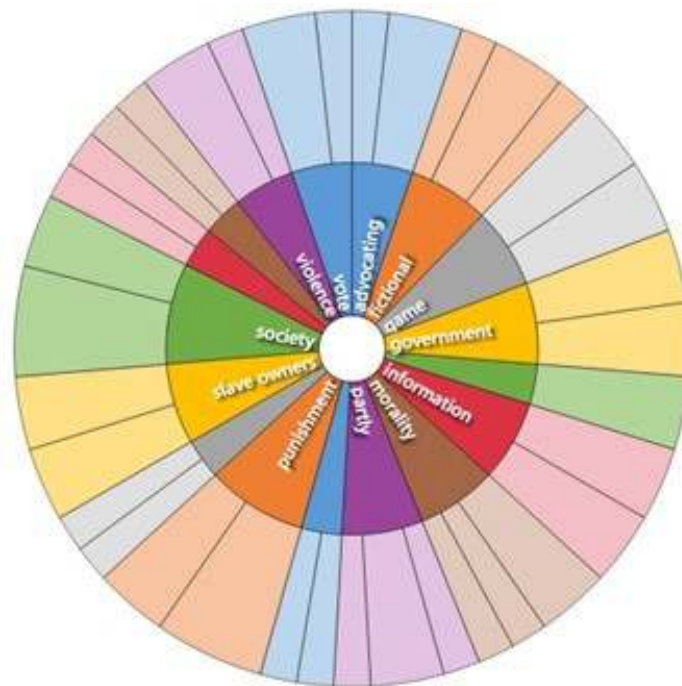


Figure 26: Thematic content – IC 7

The opening statement poses the writer's conflictive narratives ST and SISL. He wonders if the two novels were written by the same person. In so doing, that reader enacts a certain belief in the novel incontestable fascism.

He presents democracy as intrinsically flawed and physical punishment as an essential part of child-rearing. The novel is often seen as advocating militarism if not fascism. By contrast, the 1961 Sci-Fi classic *Stranger in a Strange Land* seems to advocate the polar opposite view, and is partly anti-violence and anti-fascism. *Stranger in a Strange Land* is in many ways makes the case for Peace and liberty, in the same way that *Starship Troopers* outlines the value of never-ending conflict. The tone and spirit and even writing of the two novels are as if they came from two different authors, or at least viewpoints. How did Heinlein reconcile the opposing world-views of these two classics?**(Questioning the author's inconsistency)**

The direct answer to this conundrum came from a reader who quotes Heinlein's demise of the critical reception:

Were there any interviews where Heinlein addressed the conflict between these two novels? How did he respond to accusations of fascism? Did Heinlein ever openly reject any of the views in *Starship Troopers*?

As late as 1980, the year of publication for *Expanded Universe*, a book of fiction and essays, Heinlein made no apology for *Starship Troopers*. He attacked the book's critics as largely being unable to adequately understand written English **(Factual arguments : non-fiction to explain fiction)**

Heinlein and the first circle fan-readers claim that people misunderstood the narrative and read it superficially. The point is that Heinlein used non-fiction to defend fiction. The pro *Starship Troopers* readers use the same tactic to clean the writer from outrageous allegations.

The following responses make digressions about franchise and the military service:

Heinlein's characters are not milquetoasts, very pragmatic in action, and unapologetic where survival is concerned. **(Characterization peculiarity argument)**

The society depicted in *Starship Troopers* seems fascist only at the first glance: military seems to be in power and corporal punishment is widely used. However, people only get citizenship and suffrage after their military service, and there is no evidence of any restriction of freedom of speech or movement for non-citizens. Also, you don't have a situation where one group has power by virtue of their ancestry, race, or religion.

Note that the military service in *Starship Troopers* is not compulsory. People can freely choose to serve, and in exchange they get the right to vote after they complete their service. This is obviously very different from what we have in the US and in most Western countries, but it is not fascism. **(Dissonance, doubt and resilience)**

That reader brings precisions about the nature of conscription and highlights the fact that civilians have the freedom of speech, even when they are outside the political circles. The same reader makes a parallel with US military service and the rights that result from its completion.

Discharged arguments are developed by other readers. With constancy and perseverance, readers endeavor to defend Heinlein's novel with contradictory statements:

As for the allegations of fascism, only full citizens are able to teach children "History and Moral Philosophy", which indoctrinates them into the beliefs of the nation and the importance of military service. And to address your point about voter turnout, this is not an issue with democracy as other democratic nations have far higher voter turnout than the US (Denial)

In <i>Starship Troopers</i> , Heinlein carefully set up the system so that support was handled by civilians and fighting was handled by the military. (Paradox)
--

Your obvious negative opinion of Heinlein's ideas has led you into a false premise... The society of <i>Starship Troopers</i> isn't fascist, it's very clearly not a dictatorship. One of the points of the novel was to examine what a society might look like if voting was restricted by something other than age, but it's still a democratic society, not a totalitarian one. (Contradiction)

Citizenship is not about military. It is tied to responsibility. As it should. And opposite as we have it most places in today's world, especially where "democracy" reigns. (Subjective validation)

The novel is often seen as advocating militarism if not fascism. (Judgment on reputation)
--

Yeah, but mostly those who can't read, who did not read, and essentially those who didn't reach even the first level in thinking. (And I'd be more than interested in conversation with whoever having that position and outside this set.) ... It certainly can be created by unfair accusations and mincing words. (dismissal of average readers)
--

The only anti- *Starship Troopers* statement in this cluster was met with denial or demise. A reader disdained other readers' superficial approach of the text. The presented arguments in favor of the novel display cognitive dissonance, in a variety of modes.

The following forum segment presents the readers' responses on the focal points of controversy: violence, the military, and the political system:

Let's see violence: is there any self-serving violence in ST? Show it if you can. And in <i>Stranger Mike</i> can just shift someone to another dimension, that is not considered violent? Well, violence is not the point, we just want the world in certain state.

Violence is not the point, we just want the world in certain state. (denial and authority argument)
Those who approach the book with open mind and heart can understand them with ease. Most ideas are not really complicated, just become look like that due to massive amount of dirt added in our world. Once you learn to drop the facade and irrelevantia, can look just the original form, you can manage alone (professorial tone)
The only difference in Starship Troopers is, is that people are given the choice on if they want to be citizens or not. (incomplete logical proposition)
I read people's responses here, and I can't believe that it seems everybody missed one important thing about the government set-up in Starship Troopers. i.e. that no one in the military had the right to vote while still serving in the military. Heinlein furthermore explained the reason the world was set up that way was "because it worked" (Utilitarian argument: it worked)

The readers endorsed Schopenhauer's authority argument. In other words, they do not use logical arguments (consonant thinking) to persuade the others. Instead, they use authority and expertise as the fundamental argument in convincing others and altering their beliefs / judgments. The last response implies utilitarian and pragmatic arguments. This reader supported the narrative plausibility of the political system by claiming that it suited people since it works. Other readers attempt to put forward the perspective of the narrative choices which forced Heinlein to use two different discourses. Then, the inevitable comparison between the controversial novel and a *Stranger in a Strange Land* resurfaces.

The personal statements of this segment present one reader's consciousness about Heinlein's cognitive dissonance:

There is a clear difference in the settings: The Union in Troopers was engaged in a interstellar war, with at least three intelligent belligerents (Humans, Bugs and Skinnies). Stranger in a Strange Land was a first contact tale of a sorts (still clearly intra-system), with (at least as far was revealed) benign Martian aliens. Different societies facing different challenges..... In Stranger in a Strange Land, the government wasn't working. And a new approach was needed. (narrative and comparison arguments)
While much of Heinlein's work can be read with libertarian strains, most all of his work is highly individualistic, where the protagonist(s) respond(s) to interesting settings. The settings may, or may not, have reflected Heinlein's view of where society was/is/should be. In that sense, there isn't a contradiction that needs to be reconciled. They are different people acting in different times / universes responding to different stimuli. So they act different. To assume they would somehow come to

the same world view / approach would actually be the unrealistic / inconsistent behavior. **(reader's conscious dissonance)**

I always viewed this novel as one that, obviously, treated military service with a lot of respect. But I was never able to read it as an unequivocal advocacy, even in-text, of military hierarchies (which seemed framed as a necessary evil) or the government portrayed there (kind of a mixed bag).**(digression and dissonance)**

His own personal beliefs certainly made appearances, but more than that his books thoroughly explore ideas with which he may or may not have agreed before, during, or after.

(Justification and cognitive relativism)

That reader, like others, uses narremes and manipulates them. The reader claims that Heinlein's oeuvre is too complex and too context-dependant. His statements imply that the writer's prose may or may not reflect his innermost beliefs.

The last segment of the forum features the same reader's attempt to clear Heinlein from fascistic propaganda – through the use of philosophical exegeses:

While Starship Troopers absolutely shines a positive light on the individual soldiers and on certain military values, it also puts the vast majority of the fictional culture out there pretty neutrally, leaving it up to the reader to judge where it's good and where it's bad. **(resilience to responsibility of the reader)**

Actually, I think that Heinlein simply explores the questions raised by Nietzsche's writing. Stranger takes a look at the way the Ubermensch ("superman," the next stage of man) wields a power to change the world, whether he likes it or not; the world changes necessarily through the appearance of a transcendent, and democracy of ordinary people is little more than a way to retain order until the arrival of such an individual. **(Transcendalist argument)**

Starship Troopers, on the other hand, explores the other critique of Democracy as being inferior to a meritocratic system - also going with Nietzsche's ideas. That is, the power to alter the course of a society (i.e. voting) is not given freely, but earned (in this case, through willing to put oneself at risk for the sake of others). As such, the structure of society is never at the mercy of the lowest common denominator.

(Nihilist argument)

I tend to view Heinlein through the lens of Nietzsche, and I see his ideas as fairly consistent. (an inconstant testimony of consistency and nihilism). **(Narrative deceit)**

History and moral philosophy does not promote war but simply illuminates the fact that war is a necessary evil. It also discusses moral behavior and duty that all people willing to have any contribution to society should strive for. ... At no point does it ever say military service is the requirement. **(Narrative and moral relativism)**

The recipient evokes transcendentalism and nihilism to explain Heinlein's vision of modern men. This condition illustrates the expectations of modern societies and the evolutionist fate of mankind. For him, the author has built a political proposal that does not account for moral considerations but evolutionary need. Heinlein might have believed that the next breed of leaders would be warriors.

Eventually, the most expressive reader endorsed the role of the opinion holder. His referential expertise in Heinlein works and benevolent will to defend the writer anchored the debate on context-dependant interpretation and moral relativism

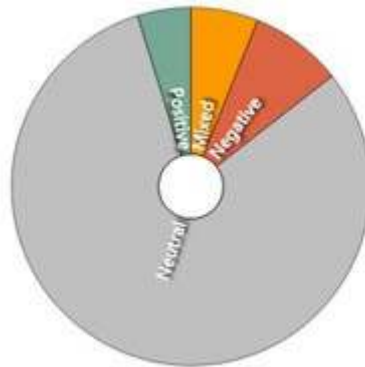


Figure 27: Readers' responses – IC 7

Tendencies in readers' responses

The sentiment analysis reveals four types of readers' responses:

Positive: defending Heinlein and his narratives.

Negative: attacking Heinlein and his narratives.

Neutral: readers who do not express a clear judgment.

Mixed: hesitant readers who swing between the three sorts of response.

Cognitive dissonance is observed within positive, neutral, and mixed responses. The anti-Heinlein readers were those who held the most consonant link between beliefs, judgments, and verbal statements. Moreover, they are not convinced by pro-Heinlein readers to change their appraisal or regret their reception of the narratives in the light of the debates. These readers are not fan readers and remain critical not only about *Starship Troopers* but they introduced *Farnham's Freehold* as another instance of the writer's dubious political positions.

The thematic content does not affirm that fascism is the most frequently used narrem. Therefore, I assume that digression and evasion characterize the majority of responses. Consequently, there is a viral cognitive dissonance within Heinlein and his readership. The contradictions and paradoxes expressed by readers are related to *Starship Troopers*, and when they attempt defending the book, they blame the film for the misrepresentation of the original narrative.

VI.2. Beliefs, Doubts, and Judgments: the Fascist Utopia as Cognitive Dissonance

As expected, Heinlein antagonists were the readers that remained consistent in their judgments about the writer and his works. The emergence of *Farnham's Freehold* as a racist novel did not occult the concern for *Starship Troopers*. Their judgment often surpassed the casual readers' response standards to reach personal judgments about the writer. Their firm beliefs were not changed, nor tempered by the pro Heinlein readers. In the most asymmetric configurations, anti Heinlein readers accepted to withdraw fascism allegations if substituted for racism.

These readers displayed a mental anchoring that does not allow any reevaluation of the works of Heinlein. They firmly expressed their standpoints vis-à-vis Heinlein as a person; and as a fiction writer. For them he is guilty of fascism and none of his neither previous, nor next works could stump their judgment. Readers were estranged by the political and philosophical discourses of Heinlein. Their estrangement was expressed, in these forums, as a reconstruction of their imaginary representations about democracy, despotism, suffrage, and conscription. The fact is that these readers felt that totalitarianism was buried in Western democracies, and that no Western writer could be so apologetic about authority and militarism in a post WWII context.

In all their statements, readers with negative opinions did not manifest tensions between thought and judgments. Their verdicts were consistent and matching a mental anchorage they held toward the novel, and its writer. On the other hand, they have estimated that Verhoeven's rendition was cathartic since it has exorcised all readers' fears of fascism. A considerable number of readers discovered Heinlein's fiction through the film adaptation. According to them, the satirical subtext was outlined by the excessive violence and the Nazi-inspired iconography. The (recently) reevaluated movie has certainly damaged the reputation of Heinlein but astonishingly brought new readers to express opinions and sentiments on the book

On the other side of the opinion spectrum, The Heinlein first-circle-fans did not confront the unpleasant 'reality' of the author's antagonists. This category of readers advocated a double standard response patterns: full denial of the accusation, or partial acknowledgements of the ambiguity of the novel. This layer displayed cognitive dissonance in a variety of expressions:

- **Autobiographical Digressions:** When unable to make a decision, the reader escapes the central issue and start speaking about himself / herself, life experiences, or relationship with fiction.
- **Discomfort – Malaise:** the expressed sentiment of unease vis-à-vis the writer and his fiction.
- **Contrast – Comparison:** the refusal to speak about the target fiction’s content and the systematic comparison/contrast with other fictions.

The readers of Heinlein are not of a particular breed. Like all reader communities, this particular one is confronted to non-consensual reception of their adulated writer. The pro-Heinlein reader community is logically forced to make defense statements on a controversial writer. Their statements challenged logic and rendered conflictive and inconsistent sentiments. The *Starship Troopers*’ pros and cons did not express decisional regrets, nor did they reevaluate their judgments. All readers’ responses persisted in supporting a belief: an opinion; or a sentiment. In the forums, the opinion holders (actual or omniscient) deployed a plethora of techniques to lead skeptical readers to change their views, but they did not succeed in altering their beliefs.

The pro-Heinlein readers did not allow themselves any attempt of cognitive dissonance reduction. They peered at inventing the most improbable arguments to bring other readers to read *Starship Troopers* alternatively, and reappraise Heinlein’s oeuvre as an eclectic (but coherent) vision of the world to be. What resulted is a collection of cognitive dissonance symptoms which demonstrate the extent of tensions:

Cognitive Dissonance Markers	Indexical Statements
Denial	Fascism refutation
Paradox	irreconcilable views
Extrapolation	Thematic generalization
Euphemism	Downsizing allegations
Digression	Thematic deflection
Contradiction	Oxymora in statements
Inconsistency	Narrem's incoherence
Selectivity	Omission of narrem's
Estrangement	Narrative destabilization
Reverse psychology	Resituating the problem
Allusion	Indirect references
Approximation	Imprecise information
Comparison	Similarities Vs dissimilarities
Lessening	Overtone softening
Critical bias	Aberrant decoding
Subjectivity	Self-projection
Escapism	Seeking another reality
Justification	Forcing reality
Contextualization	Adaptation to the setting
Confusion	Novel Vs Film
Doubt	Lack of conviction
Discredit	Defaming the antagonists
Uncertainty	Theme-related suspicion
Subjective validation	Personal canons
Dismissing	Opinions' inconsideration
Authority argument	Logic of power holder
Deceit	Hidden opinion(s)
Tension	Godwin's Law

Table 17: Readers' Cognitive Dissonance Makers

In the opinion corpus, readers displayed a variety of cognitive dissonance symptoms which were relayed through all the forums. Readers solicited other readers (omniscient or actual) to change beliefs and withdrew fascism allegations. Each manifestation of cognitive dissonance is associated to a cognitive reception bias. These biases are not limited to the conflict between thought, belief, and verbalization, but spill to emotional and psycho-affective perceptions of the narrative. Hence, other forms of cognitive bias were observed. All have in common the distortion of perception and judgmental fallacies.

Pro and anti Heinlein readers' responses exhumed some of the most common anomalies in thinking, decision making, and action. The majority of the recipients did not revise their judgments even when they were presented 'new evidence'. Cognitive dissonance encloses (upstream and downstream) some of these biases and accentuates them. These fallacies are exhibited by readers of all standpoints:

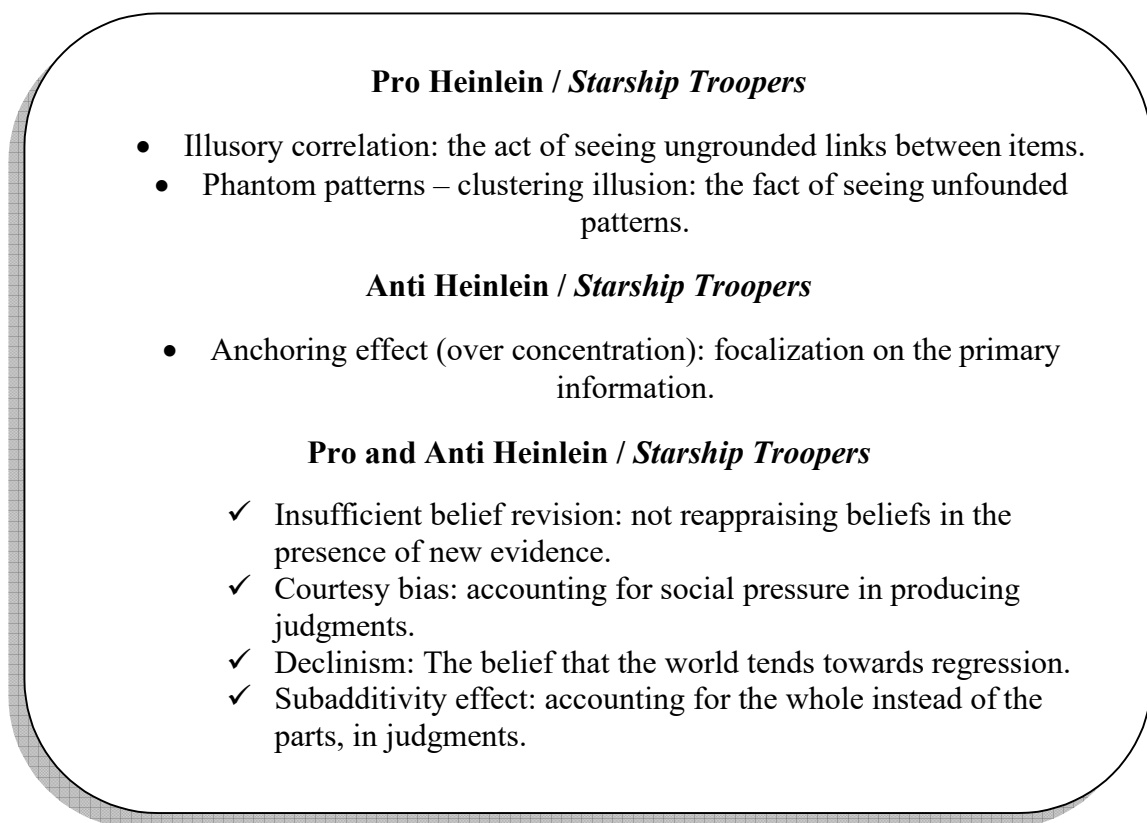


Figure 28: Judgment-related cognitive biases¹

¹ Adapted from Gilberto Montibeller and Detlof von Winterfeldt. *Cognitive and Motivational Biases in Decision and Risk Analysis*. Risk Analysis, Vol. 35, No. 7, 2015.

In all the interpretive communities (forums), it is both neutral readers and those with a mixed view who constitute the majority of recipients' answers. Nevertheless, their escapism and personal digressions do make them subjected to a form of cognitive dissonance. The fact is that their absence of standpoint nurtures the inability to make a decision and state a judgment. In other terms, the underlying contradictions of thoughts – they are exposed to – produced neutrality (unjudgmental standpoints) or uncertainty (the absence of a final judgment). The puzzling thing, in this category of readers, is that they ignore and mute their condition of cognitive dissonance. Within this type of opinions, information are telescoped and intertwined. Neutral/mixed readers visualized the conflict but did not verbalize their opinion/sentiment on the novel.

The word fascism and its variations do not appear in the novel, while the word utopia and its varieties are expressed two times in the novel (chapter 11 and chapter 12). The oxymoron consisting in joining semantically contradictory words is the essence of cognitive dissonance. Heinlein himself did not make of his discourse a fascistic pledge or an anti communist manifesto. In his narrative world, it is a speculative proposal on the Western world to be. The readers make and unmake the fascistic overtones of the novel. The estrangement specific to the genre enhances that type of beliefs and judgments

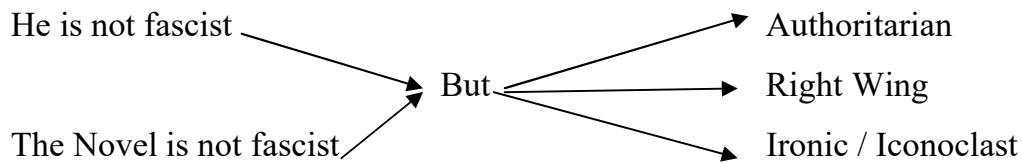
The fan readers attempt to rename *Starship Troopers'* world with names other than fascism. Some of them dare the world utopia but temper it with adjectives that attempt positivity or euphemism. The re-contextualization of the word fascist indicates that modern readers are raised to believe that fascism is a negligible quantity in regard to the scope of the novel's major themes. Unlike the viewers - who were unanimous on the film's fascistic schemes – the book fan readers have remained certain (but dissonant) on the narrative's overtones. The film detractors on the other hand, have changed their reception after 09/11.

In the forums, at the semantic-lexical level, the word fascism and its semantic declensions appear more than the word utopia. In readers' responses, the recurrence of fascism-related semantic units prevailed over the forums while the word utopia is being seldom used to *describe Starship Troopers*. The fact is that readers who defend

the novel settle for denial the fascistic overtones via the use of various persuasion strategies. In doing so, they do not validate the utopian construct: they, simply, infirm fascist allegations. Hence, a non-fascist novel is not systematically utopian. This logic involves that the opposite of fascism is not utopianism. Incidentally, by placing the debate on the fascistic aspect of the novel, over the utopian proposition, the defenders of Heinlein (unwillfully) validated the fascistic tone of the narrative. If not fascistic, the novel is (in the best configurations) an authoritarian pamphlet. Often, Pro Heinlein readers encompassed their reception of the narrative with a highlighted discourse on freedom and self-responsibility which collides with the fascistic overtones and accentuates cognitive dissonance.

Two readers introduced the term ‘Libertopia’ and ‘Fascist Utopia’ to describe the novel. The neologism introduced by the first reader relates to a quasi (unconscious) ironic depiction of the narrative. The second reader used the oxymoron fascist utopia to highlight the complexity of a reader in envisaging the story. The rarity of positive qualifiers of Heinlein’s political model urged some reader to use neologism and oxymora to disambiguate their opinion. In vain, their efforts (to reconcile antagonistic concepts) has made their cognitive dissonance more blatant and even more irreducible: the incongruence of the concept (Libertopia) and the semantic incompatibility between (fascism and utopia in a word association) tend to make the novel more estranging to unwarned readers.

Faithful to the canons of SF, Heinlein had introduced Novums in *Starship Troopers*: space and submarine-inspired suits, spaceships, and an exotic enemy (the Bugs). No significant traces of the Novums are found in readers’ responses. Recipients turned their undistracted attention from the narrative artifacts introduced by the novel and focalized on the political discourse. Thus, the most utilized figure was their endeavor to annul the fascist / fascist labels encompassing the writer and his novel. They operated by semantic slippage— attempting each time to expand the antagonistic answers and dilute their statements. Further, they customized and adapted accusations to their horizon of expectations:



The standard figure illustrates the Pro-Heinlein readers' efforts to triturate the semantic entities and impose contradictory or improbable opinions as valid facts. The Heinlein excommunication attempts were tempered by digressions and dilution strategies. In other words, fascism cannot be fascism; it might be something else: conservatism, authoritarianism, or sarcasm.

Readers consented that Heinlein's novel was a socio-historical product of a man deviating from the norms of his era. For various reasons, readers acknowledged that the author was ahead or not of his time/space. Such an estranging political proposition in the aftermath of WWII was merely not tolerable, and did not match the libertarian ideals that would later prevail. The re-contextualized readings of the novel (and the movie) offered irony and anticipation as interpretation keys for the narrative. These readings were not accessible with 1950s receptions optics.

The historical perspective envisaged by readers (of all opinion-sides) was not oriented towards Fascism and Nazism. Interpretations made by readers (beyond individual cognitive attributes) are also context-dependant. American readers did not comment directly fascism (as a political condition) because they did not experience it as did the Europeans. On the other hand, they experienced racism and gender discrimination. Indexes of racial tensions, 09/11, and misogyny/homophobia erupt with regularity within the debate on fascism. Heinlein readership associated gender and ethnicity issues with *Farnham Freehold* and *Stranger in a Strange Land*: some see astounding progressive discourse on gender equality and racial mix, while others see outrageous racist declarations.

Transactions between Heinlein and the readers and among the readers themselves are predicated on fanaticism, high expectations and disappointments. The reputation of Heinlein moved from anti communist, to socialist, passing by hippie and

anarchist. By appealing alternatively to a given political discourse / community, Heinlein automatically upsets the others. Heinlein's readership is, hence, swinging from and stretching to the most extreme sides of the political spectrum. Consequently, Heinlein's statement on an invisible link between the novels in his trilogy is not validated by his antagonists. Even his supporters were not able to reach a consensus over the coherence of the trilogy.

VI.3. the limits of sentiments analysis: the results' criticism

The results of the sentiment analysis of seven interpretive communities are utterly qualitative and do not provide statistical evidence of the scope of cognitive dissonance. The results indicate volumes, representations, inclinations, and general tendencies of Heinlein's readership and their reception-response to *Starship Troopers*. The mathematical accuracy of the software is not denied. What could be questioned, for instance, is the ability of the device to detect more subtle wavering of beliefs and hidden judgments. For that reason, I resorted to manual analysis.

As far as the object of study is concerned, forums were the standard ground of evaluation. This non-academic condition alternates professional and amateur criticism. Regularly, the statements are not asymmetrical because of the complexity of the writer's ideas and their various forms of assimilations by the readers. In other words, the verbal exchanges (sometimes) take place between fan readers and casual readers; SF readers and generic readers, Heinlein's fans and his detractors. This criticism does not disallow sentiment analysis but simply appeases the excessive claims that all opinions are trustable. Furthermore, the fact that some forums have been concluded (while others are still open) shows that the 'Heinlein Topic' fluctuates according to reading fancies and the cultural zeitgeist. To some extent, the rise and fall of conservative ideas increases and decreases the potency of Heinlein's ideas. This is to say that the author remains a constant political referent in measuring the resurgence of right-wing ideas.

Another imperative criticism consists in pointing the cognitive consistencies of the source of opinions' corpus. Opinions, sentiments and beliefs enclose complex verbal statements that are predicated on a considerable amount of subjects. Thus, readers' opinions are devoid of objectivity because their judgments are the products of

intuitions, fantasies, and empathy. Said differently, a profoundly anti-Heinlein reader (readers with cognitive consonance) would utilize rhetoric artifacts and cognitive bias to avoid judgmental revisions. Even when provided with new evidence, that type of readers does not change his belief. The same observation applies to Pro-Heinlein readers.

Finally, a point of obligatory return anchors the belief that the reading communities are heterogeneous and disparate: while this allows the exposition of a wide spectrum of beliefs, deeper insights cannot be identified. In fact, the main criticism of the method / approach is that the scope of digression does, sometimes, alter judgments. What is valuably gained on the other hand is the ascertainment that some readers indicate a certain semantic distress in their helplessness to formulate a sliced opinion. Distant reading as the study of readers' rendition is bound to the fact that the discipline is relatively recent and that is in its germinating stage; as promising as the approach could be, it is too experimental to attain an epistemic rupture.

Conclusion

The account of interpretative communities' reception has allowed the collection of a wide range of responses, opinions, and sentiments. This instantaneous photograph of readers' response gives a stable assumption that the post 09/11 appraisal of *Starship Troopers* is relatively different from the prior reception. Dissonance is expressed through the grammatical and rhetoric use of contrast and contradiction when tensions or conflicts (between belief and judgment) occur within readers' statements. The systematic recourse of autobiographical digression, generalization, and denial are other forms of cognitive dissonance. The fan readers re-characterized the terms fascism or fascistic utopianism into right wing and friendly fascism. Their redefinition of Heinlein's narrative indicates, evenly, a state of cognitive dissonance. In fact, along the study, there was a permanent question. Did fascist utopia semantically mutated to friendly fascism? Their answer is potentially affirmative as readers are perhaps not aware that they – themselves – live inside culturally drifting democracies in which otherness is contested.

This semantic reclassification can be associated to other cognitive biases which are not particularly exclusive to Heinlein's reader community. Nevertheless, as the writer himself is culturally and narratively dissonant (Retreatist, rebel, or anarchist), there are incidental indexes within his readership.

Conclusion to Part Three

This part, made of chapter V and chapter VI, has presented additional theoretical and methodological tools to the study of cognitive dissonance within the *Starship Troopers* readership community. Distant reading was utilized as a point of entry to sentiment analysis of readers' responses and their cognitive outcomes. The works of empirical approaches to readers' reception backed the study so that reception and responses of Heinlein's narrative were treated as a corpus of opinions and sentiments emanating from several interpretive communities.

The socio-historical conjuncture between the object (film adaptation) and the method (verbalized opinions on Web) demonstrated that the critical reception of the book has changed, and the movie version was hostage of the book's reputation and the political concerns of the post 09/11 world. The qualitative analysis of Readers' responses revealed a generalized cognitive dissonance within Fan readers, and more precisely the hesitant and silent ones. Other forms of cognitive biases were detected and they validate the tensions and conflicts within Heinlein's readership. These conflictive sentiments are expressed in paradoxical, contradictory, and digressive statements.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

All things considered, the purpose of this dissertation was to study Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* as a fascist utopia and the cognitive dissonance it unfolds within the author's oeuvre and its reception within his readership community. Then, the study started to expand to readers' responses and sentiment analysis. Two emerging hypotheses surfaced: is Heinlein's asserted dissonance transmissible to the readers of *Starship Troopers*? If so, how do they manage their contradictions when they produce judgments about the narrative or the author? I reviewed the concepts of Suvin's Cognitive Estrangement, Moore's Paradox, Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance, and Robert K. Merton's Theory of Deviancy. These notions have provided a clear semantic and practical picture of incoherence and inconsistencies. As a result, cognitive dissonance was combined with cultural dissonance. The latter facilitated the understanding of the scope of the socio-historical segments. The close reading of his trilogy of 'liberty and self responsibility' revealed an inconsistent literary discourse ranging from pseudo-fascism to libertarianism and anarchism. This urged the use and intertwining of supplementary theoretical and methodological tools to study this fascist utopia as a manifestation of cultural and cognitive dissonances. Therefore, I introduced Distant Reading and sentiment analysis to complete the study of readers' responses.

Beyond any idolization of Heinlein, the author is atypical in the sense that he does not match the science fiction writers' classical profiles. His engagement in writing was consequent to several failures at the professional and personal levels. He surfed on the trend of SF pulps of the 1930s and uncovered a talent for writing sensational stories for teenagers. His 'Juveniles' cradled the American youth and set the foundations of SF myths: usurpation, invasion, and utopianism. His breakthrough was when Scribner's rejected *Starship Troopers*. It was then that Heinlein reached his 'age of reason' by emancipating himself from the editorial constraints and started to explore his intimate fixations through speculative fiction. What resulted is an eclectic artwork that concentrated all the concerns of his zeitgeist. Constantly akin to the evolution of the world, Heinlein sent mixed signals with troubling political resonances. When *Starship Troopers* was published, he received a quasi-unanimous condemnation for making an apology for militarism in a corrosive and unapologetic manner. Despite his constant claims that the novel is about liberty and self responsibility, readers

scarcely believed that this piece of fiction entailed democratic values. Through dwelling on the historical consequences of violence and militarism, Heinlein has reawakened the demons of Fascism and Nazism. The Dean of Science Fiction eroded the right-thinking with his cavalier attitude and his audacity.

The study of the writer's cognitive and cultural dissonances was a complex task because of the complexity of the personage. Therein, other considerable challenges stood in the combination of multiple methodological and theoretical propositions. Yet, the final choice was settled on the basis of a collision between context-based and context-free paradigms. Besides the unavoidable body of literary theory (found in Hans George Gadamer, Fredric Jameson, Terry Eagleton and Stephen Greenblatt), it appeared soon that the nature of the topic would call upon other theorists and methodologists who crossed the borders of literature and moved in the direction of other disciplines. Hence, the discovery of Gayatri Spivak, Franco Moretti, and the Stanford Literary Lab made of Distant Reading an additional theoretical and methodological direction for the completion of the classical approaches.

The entrance point was context-based (close reading). This enabled the study of the author and his socio-historical background. The review of his anthology showed the richness and the complexity of Robert A. Heinlein's life and works. The man hesitated between several professional orientations and ultimately settled down as a writer of SF. He earned the title of the 'Dean of Science Fiction' and left an anchored print in the US literary scene. The Twentieth Century recorded the rise of totalitarian ideologies: Bolshevism, Fascism, and Nazism. Even though America was not directly assaulted, the nation was impacted by fall of European countries, one after the other, under totalitarian regimes. A second World War was inevitable and despite the triumph of the Allies, the scars of this somber period persisted haunting the peoples' unconscious. The advent of the Cold War was an optimal condition for Heinlein and other SF writers. Heinlein - who witnessed the administrations of fourteen American presidents - moved ostensibly from Right to Left Wing and recorded the most significant happenings of the Twentieth Century. The most marking events that characterized his active years were McCarthyism and the Hippie Movement. Heinlein took anti-communist postures with *Starship Troopers* but disoriented the readers with

the communitarian novel *A Stranger in Strange Land* and the agitating fiction *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*.

Once the socio-historical study completed, other questions emerged: what could be Heinlein's genuine political affiliation and, further, how do his narratives operate in regard to the inconsistencies of his discourse? At this point, there was a need for the conceptual definition of inconstancy through theories borrowed from literary and psycho-cognitive theories. Darko Suvin's contributions on cognitive estrangement constituted the anchoring point. The works of Suvin demonstrated that SF is by essence estranging and contradictory. His works helped to build a basis for in-text inconsistency theory. Then, the reviewing of philosophical and psychological works on logic and contradiction led to the discovery of Leon Festinger's theory of Cognitive Dissonance. This condition is defined as a mental conflict between beliefs and actions. The theory was associated, in this dissertation, to Robert K. Merton's Theory of Deviancy (or Cultural Dissonance) for the sake of understanding Heinlein's thought and the coherence of his discourse vis-à-vis his other works and the socio-historical context in which he lived.

Done with the conceptual framework, the detection of cognitive dissonance appealed for the elaboration of a methodological framework to link the writer with his works and the reception – responses mode he might provoke on the readers. I found in psychonarratology and cognitive narratology partial means to reach that objective. The seminal work of Dixon and Bortolussi (2003) exposed the essence of the feasible methods to study cognitive dissonance. Hence, the results of these readings connected psychonarratology with readers' response and reception theory. In parallel, I found similar studies in the works of Purves and Beach; Odell and Cooper, and Cooper and Michalak. These scholars demonstrated that the study of cognitive dissonance (as part of reception – response) is achievable through psychonarratology. The reviewed works revealed that the aforementioned scholars have paid attention to contrasts and contradictions. Their descriptive and empirical studies alluded to the fact that cognitive dissonance is identifiable and even measurable within the narratological-receptive-responsive process.

The study of Heinlein's 'Trilogy of Liberty and Self Responsibility' as proclaimed by the author himself has undertaken a psychonarratological direction. The prospective reading and the rendition of the most significant narremes in *Starship Troopers*, *A Stranger in a Strange Land*, and *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* helped the extraction of the thematic content of the three novels. It appeared that Heinlein is an elusive writer who blurred his narratives with antagonistic themes and unsteady political standpoints. A systematic link to the socio-historical context showed that his works were reactions to the mutation of America: McCarthyism and the Hippie Age. Furthermore, the psychonarratological approach unveiled a contradiction within the writer's oeuvre and proved that he was culturally dissonant in regard to the mainstream intellectual doxa. *Starship Troopers* appealed to belligerence in the times of appeasement, while *A Stranger in a Strange Land* and *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* promoted Hippie values during and after McCarthyism and its traumas. In Merton's classification, Heinlein would be a retreatist and a rebel. At this point, the fascism allegations are partially dissipated and Heinlein can be reconsidered as an agitator.

The inevitable association of the novel with its first film adaptation posed the question of the role of the implied readers' reception and response to the work of Heinlein. I conceived this segment of the work as transition to the analysis of recipients' feedback. I referred to James Gifford's classification (of Heinlein's readers) to elaborate a corpus of Heinlein criticism and theorize the correlation between reputation and actual reception. The findings leaned in the direction of an evolved and erratic criticism. Alexi Panshin has according to Gifford, damaged Heinlein's reputation on the basis of his controversial novel. The film adaptation aggravated the reputation of the narrative and engendered two sorts of criticisms: film reviews and a new academic criticism. Within the scope of the film, it appeared that Verhoeven / Neumeier expressed their own cognitive dissonance in the reception of the novel, and that they 'were fighting against the book'. The filmmakers included another cognitive dissonance – in what they consider as a fascist utopia – in their response to what he read. The rendition of the book included a double narrative resulting from their views and Heinlein's view. On the other hand, the film helped the emergence of a new

Heinlein criticism which attempted to debunk ignored features of the Dean of SF's narratives. For instance, the 2010-onwards-criticism introduced gender and ethnicity themes such as gentrification, whiteness studies, and queer theory. In the reference to *Starship Troopers*, the concept of fascist utopia disappeared gradually and was replaced by Bertram Gross' term 'Friendly Fascism' to describe the commoditization of right wing values in the American mainstream culture.

The scholarly criticism of Heinlein shifted focus from the question of fascism to other areas of interest. Contemporary criticism favored a new outlook beyond the established judgments. Discerned perspectives of ethnic, gendered, and globalized readings disclosed other facets of the writer's thematic richness. Although fascistic suspicions are recurrently recalled, readers highlighted Heinlein's anticipatory and progressive depictions of female characters, colored people and the LGBT community. Moreover, some critics hailed his defiance to the Church, Federal Government, and all instated forms of oligarchy. The skepticism of the author's detractors is subdued by the recontextualization of his discourse in a confined space-time. The most devoted defenders of Heinlein downsized the tenor of fascism allegations. The adduced argument is that *Starship Troopers'* society is fascistic in the way it is ruled, but it counterweights this with progressive social gains: gender and race equality, for instance.

Incidentally, the new Heinlein criticism shed light on further theoretical and methodological gaps in the study of readers' responses, the detection of cognitive dissonance, and the semantic scope of the concept 'Fascist Utopia'. Subsequently, the last section of the study was meant to fill in these gaps. Firstly, the choice of including semi-actual readers (readers who post their opinions in forums) was inspired by Stanley Fish's interpretive communities. These communities would have in common the factual condition of belonging to Heinlein's readership. The second theoretical tool was consequent to the inclusion of Distant Reading (Gayatri Spivak, Franco Moretti, and the Stanford Literary Lab) as academic and intellectual justifications to the intersection of literary theory with sentiment analysis. The so-called analysis would entwine all the previous theoretical and methodological tools into opinion mining within readers' responses. Once the transition operated, the reviews of some concrete

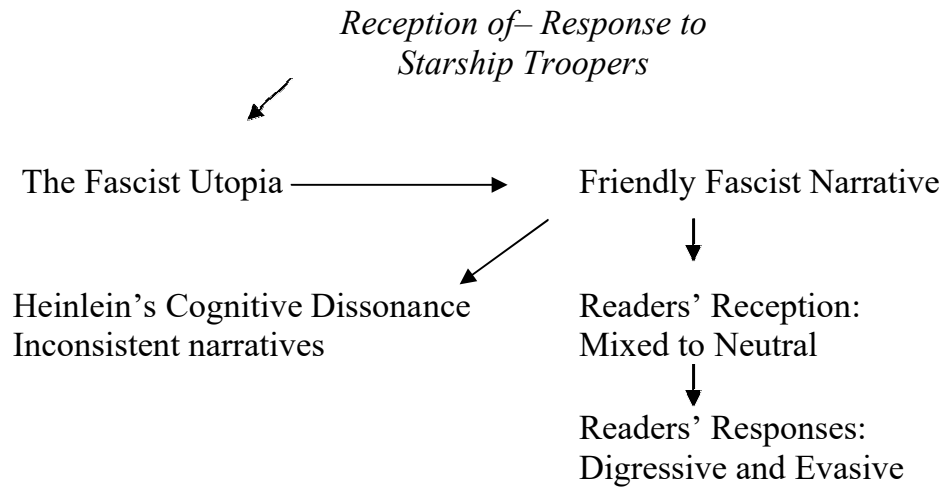
application of sentiments analysis comforted the feasibility of the study within the readers of *Starship Troopers*. If there is a cognitive dissonance within the interpretive communities then it would be identified and explained. Hence, I selected seven forums using the tags Heinlein, Fascism, and *Starship Troopers*. These forums served in the construction of a corpus of opinions involving the reception and responses to the narrative. The found discussions were published after the 1997 movie release and stretch from 2001 to 2017; two decades which witnessed the exit of the US Democrats from the executive and the arrival of the Neo-Conservatives in the George W. Bush administration.

The extracted opinions / sentiments were analyzed manually and with NVIVO. Only the direct sentiments were picked to verify the notions of beliefs, judgments and decisions. The sentiment analysis sorted out four types of sentiments: positive, negative, neutral, and mixed. The detected cognitive dissonance is the general tendency observed within positive, neutral and mixed opinions. The reputation of the writer estranged readers and urged them to respond with autobiographical digressions, expressions of discomfort, or systematic comparisons with Heinlein's other works. Cognitively dissonant readers display perceptible tensions and struggle with the dilemma of judging the work as fascist or utopian.

Other cognitive biases were observed such as denial, escapism, and insufficient belief revision. The main factor that could explain this condition is the author's established reputation colliding with his fandom's inconsistent appraisals. The oxymoron fascist utopia (expressing their contradictions) is renamed into friendly fascism. The fact is that the opinion context mirrors a latent tendency within the American culture that culminated in the 2000s. The defenders of Heinlein advocate for the re-reception of his novel as premonitory statement about the future. The like-minded film frontal narrative is regularly quoted to back these claims.

As observed within scholarly new criticism, fascism is a minor concern for the casual readers. In fact, the expressed responses join the post 2000 Heinlein criticism. As a matter of fact, readers introduce fascism-free topics related to contemporary concerns: LGBT, Whiteness, and Gentrification, to name a few. The weight of fascism does not affect contemporary readers because friendly fascism melted in the US

political morals. All in all, the expected outcome related to cognitive dissonance was partially validated. The other outcome spotlights the existence of cognitive dissonance in the emergence of friendly fascism as a semantic mutation to describe *Starship Troopers*:



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Résumé

Ce travail traite de la question de la dissonance cognitive dans le roman *Starship Troopers* de l'écrivain Américain Robert A. Heinlein. 'Doyen de la Science Fiction' et figure de proue de l'âge d'or de l'anticipation romanesque, Heinlein est aussi connu pour ces prises de positions idéologique dont la portée alterne le discours fascisant, les pensées libertaires, ou les appels à l'insurrection et l'anarchisme. Le roman en question est souvent perçu comme une 'Utopie Fasciste' en raison de son apologie de la militarisation de la jeunesse. Le but de ce travail est de détecter et d'analyser l'étendu de la dissonance cognitive dans l'œuvre du romancier et par extension à son lectorat. Dans cette perspective et à travers une approche multidisciplinaire (nouveau historicisme, psychologie cognitive, théories des réceptions-réponses et psychonarratologie), je tente de combiner la lecture attentive (une analyse contextuelle et psychonarratologique) avec une lecture distanciée (une analyse des sentiments non-contextuelle des réponses du lectorat de Heinlein). L'approche de lecture attentive (sa biographie, son œuvre, et son ancrage) démontre que l'auteur avait le don de brouiller son discours. La construction du cadre théorique (Darko Suvin, Frederic Jameson, Leon Festinger, Dixon & Bertolussi, et Franco Moretti) a permis l'élaboration de nouvelles propositions théorique et méthodologiques. Dans le volet sociohistorique, sa 'trilogie de la liberté et de la responsabilité' (*Starship Troopers* 1959, *A Stranger in a Strange Land* 1961, et *the Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, 1966) est passée en revue. Ce qui en ressort c'est le constat que l'auteur était dans un état de dissonance culturelle : son discours était incompatible avec les valeurs du discours dominant de son temps. En 1997, l'adaptation de son roman par Paul Verhoeven a permis la redécouverte de son œuvre par un nouveau lectorat avec un lot de nouvelles formes de réception de réponses - notamment, les choix de des Etats Unies en matière de politique étrangère depuis la fin de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale. Enfin, L'analyse des sentiments des web-lecteurs (dans le cadre de la lecture distanciée) démontre l'existence d'une dissonance cognitive dans leurs feedback. Les formes les plus communes sont : la contradiction verbale, les jugements incohérents, et la digression autobiographique. D'autres formes de biaisements cognitifs ont été décelées : ils confirment qu'une dissonance existe dans la communauté interprétative de *Starship Troopers*. Les lecteurs de Heinlein n'envisage pas son œuvre comme étant une 'Utopie Fasciste' mais plus comme un récit qui s'inscrit dans les tendances fascisantes (le fascisme a visage humain) qui caractérise la pensée d'une frange de la société Américaine. L'autre résultat de la recherche a établi le lien de transmissibilité de la dissonance entre l'auteur et sa communauté de fans.

Mots-clés

Analyse de Sentiments – Dissonance Cognitive - Lecture Distanciée- Réponses du Lectorat - Robert A. Heinlein - *Starship Troopers* – Utopie Fasciste.

ملخص

يتناول هذا العمل مسألة التنافر المعرفي في رواية ستارشيب تروبرز للكاتب الأمريكي روبرت أ. هاينلين. يصفته عميد الخيال العلمي ورمز العصر الذهبي للخيال العلمي. يُعرف هاينلين بهذه المواقف لأيديولوجية التي يتناول مداها نطاق الخطاب الفاشستي مع أفكار التحررية و الانتقاضية والفوضوية ضد القيم السائدة في العالم الغربي عقب الحرب العالمية الثانية. فغالبًا ما ينظر إلى الرواية المعنية على أنها "طوباوية فاشية" بسبب إشهارها لفكرة عسكرة الشباب في مجتمع افتراضي ومثالي.

الهدف من هذا العمل هو كشف وتحليل مدى التنافر المعرفي في عمل الروائي ، ومدى إنتقاله إلى قرائه. في هذا المنظور ومن خلال نهج متعدد التخصصات ، حاولت الجمع بين القراءة المتأنية (تحليل سياقي و سيكولوجي-سردى) مع قراءة بعيدة (تحليل غير سياقي لاستجابات قراء هاينلين). ففي الشق الاجتماعي- التاريخي فمت بدراسة سيرة الكاتب و أعماله و مواقفه الإيديولوجية. لقد اتضح أن للكاتب شخصية معقدة و انه من الصعب حصره في فضاء فكري محدد. اما في شق ال قراءة البعيدة لقد وضعت القراء في مركز الاهتمام – كعنصر فعال في تحليل مدى انتقال التنافر المعرفي من الكاتب إلى قراءه. لقد تبينت مجال نظري مبني على تعدد التخصصات من مناهج التاريخانية الجديدة الى علم النفس المعرفي – مرورا بنظريات التلقي و الإجابة و سيكولوجية السرد. لقد قمت باستغلال أعمال داركو سوفين ، فريدريك جاميسون ، ليون فستنجر ، ديكسون - برتولوتشي و فرانكو موريتي لبناء مقترحات نظرية و منهجية جديدة. فقامت بتحليل "ثلاثية الحرية والمسؤولية" من الجانب السيكولوجي- السردى : ستارشيب تروبرز (1959) ، سترانجر ان سترنج لاند (1961) وذا مون ايز / هارث ميسترس (1966). ما يبرز هو أن المؤلف كان في حالة من التنافر الثقافي: كان خطابه غير متوافق مع قيم الخطاب السائد في عصره. في عام 1997 ، سمح الاقتباس السينمائي لروايته من طرف المخرج الهولندي بول فيرهوفن بإعادة اكتشاف عمله من طرف جمهور جديد مع الكثير من الأشكال الجديدة و المتنوعة للتلقي و النقد. و كان اهم ما ابرزه الفيلم هو انسجام خطاب هاينلين مع السياسة الخارجية للولايات المتحدة الامريكية بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية. اخيرا و في الجانب التطبيقي لقد قمت بتحليل مشاعر قراء هاينلين عبر ردودهم المرسله في منتديات الإنترنت الخاصة بالكاتب (في نطاق من القراءة عن بعد . ما لوحظ يدل على وجود التنافر المعرفي في تصريحاتهم و تلقيهم . فكانت أكثر الأشكال شيوعا هي: التناقض اللفظي و الأحكام غير متماسكة و الأبتعاد عن الموضوع. وقد تم تحديد أشكال أخرى من التحيز المعرفي : هذا يؤكد وجود تنافر في المجموعة التأويلية في تفسير الرواية : قراء هاينلين فهم لا ينظرون إلى عمله باعتباره "طوباوية فاشية" ولكن يفسرونها كرواية تتناسب مع الميولات الفاشية أو مل يسمى بالفاشية الودية الذي يميز تفكير بعض التيارات الأيديولوجية الأمريكية. النتيجة الأخرى للبحث أثبتت علاقة عدوى التنافر من المؤلف الى جمهور القراء.

كلمات مفتاحية

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