

# Heinlein Society

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## "Starry-eyed internationalists" versus the Social Darwinists: Heinlein's transnational governments

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The late science fiction author Robert A. Heinlein, born and raised in Missouri, has been widely read and widely discussed. In his works we may see the fundamental dichotomies of the twentieth-century American consciousness: idealism and pragmatism, interventionism and isolationism, internationalism and Social Darwinism. The presence of such contradictory values in the United States is enough of a truism, I hope, to require little discussion. Robert Scholes and Eric S. Rabkin consider Heinlein "in some respects...the most typically American writer in all the ranks of science fiction" (56), and H. Bruce Franklin calls him "a very representative American" (5-6); his very popular works perhaps shape America almost as much as they reflect it.

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Nearly all are familiar with the libertarian, laissez faire philosophies of government espoused in many Heinlein works. Generally Heinlein believes that individuals should be free to succeed or fail on their own, without the government either unduly restricting the clever or aiding the less able. Life, we are repeatedly told, is a struggle for existence, with the human species being strengthened by the survival of the intelligent and resourceful and, C. W. Sullivan III correctly reminds us, those who demonstrate "perseverance, loyalty,... idealism, integrity, and courage" (65).

For such sentiments Heinlein is almost universally considered a Social Darwinist. Brian Aldiss, Peter Nicholls, Franz Rottensteiner, and Scholes and Rabkin all class him as such, often rather derisively. Even Dennis E. Showalter, for all his care to clear Heinlein of the charges of fascism and militarism, still refers easily to "Heinlein's crude Social Darwinism" (115). Alexei Panshin holds that "Heinlein's idea of liberty is wolfish and thoroughgoing" (162), and despite his interest in Calvinist aspects of Heinlein's work, George Edgar Slusser also nods to Heinlein's "Darwinian" idea that "man must fight" (Classic 8; RAH 22). Certainly there is truth to such charges, though the rhetoric occasionally is unduly sneering.

Yet such easy categorization may indeed be too easy. The Darwinistic pressures at work in Heinlein's fictions, after all, often are natural ones, physical forces against which it would be foolish not to struggle: environmental extremes, diseases, predatory creatures - including intelligent ones. Moreover, Heinlein's purported "wolfishness" has been rather one-sidedly emphasized. Frank H. Tucker is more careful when he notes the Darwinistic elements in Heinlein's works without too easily attributing to Heinlein the "thoroughly ruthless approach to human affairs" which the label of Social Darwinist usually includes (172-73). Moreover, though Leon Stover may overstate his case somewhat, there is some truth to his assertion that Heinlein actually does not espouse "economic warfare battled out within the species for the sake of its top dogs, as if man were just another animal" (29). Although when the pressures are economic, Heinlein does often advocate an "every man for himself" philosophy, he also complains to varying degrees against monopolies and unjust big business in such pieces as "Let There Be Light" (1940), "Logic of Empire" (1941), *Red Planet* (1949), *Starman Jones* (1953), and *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* (1966). As Tucker concedes, "There are contradictions and dilemmas..." throughout Heinlein's work (192).(1)

Concerning the militaristic and expansionistic aspects of Social Darwinism, however, Heinlein takes a much clearer stance. When the pressures acting upon individuals and nations are the result of military aggression, Heinlein's Darwinistic message of struggle is not a celebration of mindless expansionism but, consistently, a call to arms to those who would remain free; he espouses justifiable defense rather than rapacious offense. The distinction is an important one which often seems to be missed.

Indeed, despite the often-decried undercurrent of Social Darwinism in Heinlein's science fiction, there also exists a significant dallying with transnational political organizations. Heinlein's idealism and pragmatism concerning international relations constantly temper each other, often producing entities that, if not necessarily ideals of charity and brotherhood, at least are not mindless predatory organisms but instead are commonsensical and neighborly. Heinlein seems to suggest - correctly, I believe - that without collective security we could find ourselves at the mercy of the real Social Darwinists.

Heinlein's work with transnational organizations can be grouped into four main categories: the earlier, more idealistic novels such as *Space Cadet* (1948), which incorporate fairly successful transnational organizations that often attempt not only to keep the peace but to do other good as well, saving lives and protecting individual rights, all the while supported by generally democratic political infrastructures; the later, more cautiously internationalist novels exemplified by *Have Space Suit - Will Travel* (1958) and *Glory Road* (1963), wherein organizations consciously limit themselves to an often more pragmatic peacekeeping; the infrequent warnings against governmental intrusion, like *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961) and *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* (1966); and, of course, the occasional pieces like *Farmer in the Sky* (1950) and *Time for the Stars* (1956), which merely employ some basically unexamined form of world government as a conventionalized science fictional backdrop. Though in 1958 Heinlein wrote to his agent decrying the naivete of the "starry-eyed internationalists" who urged disarmament and who longed for a "world state" (Grumbles 210), in his own work Heinlein himself apparently cannot help longing for some sort of transnational

peacekeeping entity, albeit often a more practical one.

In most of his juvenile novels, written between 1947 and 1959, Heinlein postulates successful or at least quasi-successful transnational organizations. Presented approvingly, at first with conveniently little detail of their development or workings though later with more detail, many seem driven less by simple national self-interest than by self-sacrificing idealism and notions of collective security. Fred Erisman notes that the Scribner's juveniles "reinforce Heinlein's belief in informed action and acceptance of responsibility as earmarks of the mature citizen" (99); I agree, and I suggest that Heinlein often moves farther, from the mature citizen to the mature nation. Although there are exceptions, some of his earliest novels are his most idealistic and optimistic.

In *Rocket Ship Galileo* (1947) the United Nations controls a great stockpile of nuclear weapons (153), including "the UN's Doomsday Bomb" of 1951 (46). Although independent nations still exist, the "UN police" ensure that "Wars are out" (46); at the very end of the book the willingness to enforce this peace is emphasized when the UN flexes its muscles to capture the last stronghold of Nazis threatening world takeover (186). In this juvenile work the stability of the policing system is taken for granted, never truly explained and certainly never questioned.

*Space Cadet* (1948), which takes place late in the twenty-first century, over a hundred years after *Rocket Ship Galileo*, supposes the existence of a "Solar Federation" (47), based on the three noble yet nebulous principles of "Freedom, Peace, and Law" (44), the Federation consists of large nations such as the North American Union and, apparently, small nations in which "some pipsqueak Hitler" (111) still might come to power. The Federation has a constitution, though we never learn precisely how the Terran nations interact within it.

The policing arm of the Federation is the Interplanetary Patrol. Responsible "to keep the peace of the Solar System and to protect the liberties of its peoples" (46), it very conspicuously contains members not only from North America but from Africa and Asia and the human colonies on Venus and Ganymede. The easy tolerance of the Patrol may have seemed very forward looking when the book was written, and Heinlein reinforces the point by having a cadet gently remind one new recruit that while it is fine for another to volunteer information about his origins, "it is incorrect for you to ask him" (17). The protagonist, with this overheard lesson "stuck in his memory" (17), internalizes the multinational and multi-ethnic ethos, and when his father tries to convince the idealistic cadet that the Patrol could never act against the North American Union, the young man is quietly incensed at such provincial nationalism (123-24).

Although in this book - and in the story "The Long Watch" (1949) - we are informed of an attempted revolt from Moon Base early in the history of the Patrol, it is quickly stopped (*Space Cadet* 24; *Past* 263-76). According to one officer, "We might have ended up with the tightest, most nearly unbreakable tyranny the world has ever seen. But the human race got a couple of lucky breaks, and it didn't work out that way. It's the business of the Patrol to see that it stays lucky" (*Space Cadet* 110). Eighty years later the Patrol apparently runs with unexplained flawlessness, using the "space marines" as a "switch" to control the tantrums of misbehaving nations (111) and maintaining its nuclear "proowler bombs" in overlapping polar orbits as the ultimate deterrent (118-24).

Although the Patrol thus is armed most fearsomely, its ideological underpinnings are wonderfully noble. At their swearing-in ceremony the cadets are told, "It is not enough that you be skilled, clever, brave - The trustees of this awful power must each possess a meticulous sense of honor, self-discipline beyond all ambition, conceit, or avarice, respect for the liberties and dignity of all creatures, and an unyielding will to do justice and give mercy. He must be a true and gentle knight" (46). Later one officer explains to a cadet, "Strictly speaking, the Patrol is not a military organization at all." He continues, "your purpose is not to fight, but to prevent fighting, by every possible means. The Patrol is not a fighting organization; it is the repository of weapons too dangerous to entrust to military men" (110). Unlike *Rocket Ship Galileo*, therefore, *Space Cadet* does at least address the question of stability, though it smoothly glosses over readers' doubts.

The easy-going novel *The Star Beast* (1954), set around three centuries ahead of the present (223) in a future of interstellar travel, is another good example of the optimistic idealism of Heinlein's early juveniles. The Federation's central government, like that in *Space Cadet*, seems to operate smoothly and justly, and while it encompasses many planets, its laws "will not trample on local law and custom except where they are hopelessly opposed to superior law" (56). The Federation's own "ancient custom," we are told, is "'All for One'... against the Galaxy if necessary" (214), meaning that human rights are held so strongly that the Federation will not unjustly surrender one of its citizens to another power even to avert a disastrous war.

Whereas in *Space Cadet* decisions of policy apparently are made gravely and professionally at some high level unseen by the readers, in *The Star Beast* we get a glimpse of such workings. Unsurprisingly, the politicking is rather reminiscent of the United States's political system, with great nations and planets like the states in our federal system - or, perhaps more accurately, like the nations of the United Nations. The Secretariat of the Federation "is responsible not to the North American Union, nor even to the peoples of Earth, but to all the sovereignties of the Federation, both on Terra and elsewhere" (198), and there is mention both of the Federation Council's process of requiring votes of confidence and of some sort of local elections as well. The system is presented as workable and fair.

In this novel we may also see a hint of pragmatism alongside the idealism. A senior diplomat explains that because the complexity and danger of so many situations in the modern world require the urgent attention of highly trained specialists, their political system "is not now a real democracy and it can't be": "It would be pleasant to discuss each problem, take a vote, then repeal it later if the collective judgment proved faulty. But it's rarely that easy. We find ourselves oftener like pilots of a ship in a life-and-death emergency. Is it the pilot's duty to hold powwows with passengers? Or is it his job to use his skill and experience to try to bring them home safely?" (223). Yet Heinlein will not let us forget the idealism, for the diplomat also maintains, "we have managed to keep a jury-rigged republican government and to maintain democratic customs. We can be proud of that" (223).

*Double Star* (1956) displays a similar mix of idealism and pragmatism concerning the transnational sphere. Although the Empire of this novel is a constitutional monarchy rather than a democracy, one character assures the protagonist,

"our present system insures responsible government" (76). Advised in his duties by a Supreme Minister (95) and by a Grand Assembly (76) elected by franchise, which appears still to be fractionally short of universal (32), the Emperor "maintain[s] continuity, preserving the symbol of the state"; his position "is not glamorous, but it is useful" (98).

Throughout the book, Heinlein throws in many incidental points about this system of government, but in contrast to such pragmatic, workable politics are the ideals that underlie it. The Expansionist Party, for which the protagonist is working, "is founded on the notion that free trade, free travel, common citizenship, common currency, and a minimum of Imperial laws and restrictions are good not only for the citizens of the empire but for the Empire itself" (96). Just as racism apparently is long dead, the government with its legislation even helps break down speciesism: "Martians must be granted the same privileges on Earth that humans enjoyed on Mars" (85), and apparently Mars soon will be accepted into the Empire (95). Clearly the Empire of this book is working toward freedom and justice.

In *Citizen of the Galaxy* (1957) Heinlein creates a colorful, gritty future wherein an elite military organization struggles against the widespread slavery which "starts up in every new land and... is terribly hard to root out" (180). Human interstellar colonization has expanded to "a globe of space nine hundred light-years in diameter, the center of which [is] legendary Terra, the cradle of mankind" (127), and cultures are so disparate that they might receive anthropological investigation. To the less-educated people at the peripheries, the distant Earth truly is a myth, while to those at the center, the existence of slavery beyond the fairly well policed boundaries of the Terran Hegemony is quite literally incredible.

Standing against the greed on one side and the ignorance on the other, however, is the Space Guard. The Captain of a Guard ship explains to the protagonist:

[T]he Guard is just the policeman and the mailman; we haven't had a major war in two centuries. What we do work at is the impossible job of maintaining order on the frontier, a globe three thousand light-years in circumference - no one can understand how big it is; the mind can't swallow it.

Nor can human beings police it. It gets bigger every year. Dirtsides police eventually close the gaps. But with us, the longer we try the more there is. So to most of us it's a job, an honest job, but one that can never be satisfied. (180)

The noble job is made more difficult because even "The Terran Hegemony is no empire; it is simply leadership in a loose confederation of planets. The difference between what the Guard could do and what it is allowed to do is very frustrating" (233). The overall political situation may be far from ideal, but the guardians of decency seem close to it; they are more than simple peacekeepers.

Just as the Guard's task is idealistic, so is its very organization. Members "like to think of the Service as one enormous 'family'" (173), in camaraderie and in commitment to duty. Recruits come from throughout the human sphere, and ships' crews are purposefully comprised of men "from many planets"; "nobody care[s] where a man came from or what he ha[s] been" (175). When crew members notice the tattoo mark of the protagonist's former slavery, "Responses var[y] from curiosity, through half-disbelief, to awed surprise that here was a man who had been through it capture, sale, servitude, and miraculously, free again. Most civilians [do] not realize that slavery still exist[s]; Guardsmen [know] better. No one [is] nasty about it" (184). Indeed, in an echo of *Space Cadet*, when one obnoxious crewman finally does sneer, the Captain cites him for "Inciting to Riot, specification: using derogatory language with reference to another Guardsman's Race, Religion, Birthplace, or Condition previous to entering Service," and the man receives a harsher sentence than the one who is goaded into throwing a bowl of mashed potatoes in his face (186).

Despite the great uproar surrounding *Starship Troopers* (1959), I consider this novel also to be one of Heinlein's idealistic treatments of internationalism, for the central government goes beyond mere restrained peacekeeping to the protection of human lives and rights. Unlike the slick, under-explained idealism *Rocket Ship Galileo* or *Space Cadet*, of course, the underlying ethics of this later book run parallel with more pragmatic realism. Yet just as the meritocracy of the career diplomats of *The Star Beast* does not lessen that work's respect for the individual and reverence for "republican government and . . . democratic customs" (223), neither does the pragmatism of *Starship Troopers* lessen this work's basic respect for individual and collective freedom, and the self-sacrificing commitment such freedom sometimes may require.

Certainly there is much pragmatism in Heinlein's twenty-eighth-century Terran Federation, that loose multinational government - not an organ of "imperialism," as H. Bruce Franklin apparently likes to imagine it (112) - whose Constitution guarantees "liberties and privileges [to] all citizens and lawful residents of the Federation, its associated states and territories" (30). Franchise is limited to those volunteers who have served a two-year stint in the military whether in combat units or in "the various non-combatant auxiliary corps" (32) - or, for "career men," a twenty-year term (128). Heinlein presents these veterans, however, as being neither smarter nor more disciplined than civilians. Moreover, "nobody can describe accurately how the Federation came about; it just grew. With national governments in collapse at the end of the XXth century, something had to fill the vacuum, and in many cases it was returned veterans. . . .What started as an emergency measure became constitutional practice . . . in a generation or two" (142).

Yet underlying this "practical" system which "works satisfactorily" (143) is the very idealistic concept of self-sacrifice. An instructor in Officer Candidates School explains the situation:

Under our present system every voter and officeholder is a man [or woman] who has demonstrated through voluntary and difficult service that he places the welfare of the group ahead of personal advantage....

He may fail in wisdom, he may lapse in civic virtue. But his average performance is enormously better than that of any class of rulers in history.... [W]e have democracy unlimited by race, color, creed, birth, wealth, sex, or conviction, and anyone may win sovereign power by a usually short and not too arduous term of service nothing more than a light workout to our cave-man ancestors. . . . Since sovereign franchise is the ultimate in human authority, we insure that all who wield it accept the ultimate in social responsibility - we require each person who wishes to exert control over the state to wager his own life and lose it, if need be - to save the life of the state. The maximum responsibility a

human can accept is thus equated with the ultimate authority a human can exert. Yin and yang, perfect and equal (144-46).

The result, we are told, is that "personal freedom for all is greatest in history, living standards are as high as productivity permits, crime is at its lowest ebb" (144). The critic need not agree that such results will stem from the stated causes, but the society as drawn definitely is not the "megalomaniac" world Brian Aldiss portrays it (318).

The emphasis on self-sacrifice and responsibility for the whole is reiterated throughout the novel. A person's "noblest fate," we are told, is to protect his "beloved home" (74). Though some will misinterpret this as mere knee-jerk nationalism, Heinlein is not simply flag-waving, for he also puts the human most carefully into the equation:

How often have you seen a headline like this? TWO DIE ATTEMPTING RESCUE OF DROWNING CHILD. If a man gets lost in the mountains, hundreds will search and often two or three searchers are killed. But the next time somebody gets lost just as many volunteers turn out.

Poor arithmetic . . . but very human. It runs through our folklore, all human religions, all our literature a racial conviction that when one human needs rescue, others should not count the price. (176)

Clearly, despite an unfortunate tendency for characters to want to settle matters with their knuckles or slug it out in the cliched "friendly" brawl, the overriding importance of the noble concern not simply for the legal concept of the State but for the community itself with all the rights and privileges of the individual - should not be forgotten.

David N. Samuelson contends that during the 1950s Heinlein "continued to be involved in a kind of special pleading" for, among other things, "a one-world viewpoint" (60); though there is some truth to this, the contention is rather overstated. Heinlein's "starry-eyed internationalists" letter notwithstanding (Grumbles 210), Heinlein's fiction usually suggests not true world government but world cooperation. The nation-state, after all, often still exists. Moreover, the apparently infallible professional idealism of the Interplanetary Patrol of Space Cadet and the Space Guard of Citizen of the Galaxy comes to be replaced by a more pragmatic sense of collective security, a sense which grows ever stronger as the 1950s continue.

Have Space Suit - Will Travel (1958), for example, returns to a Federated Free Nations less grandiose and far more manageable than the Solar Federation of Space Cadet. Though the secretary general and the Security Council may command military forces for international police actions (256-57), individual nations still have their own defenses. Despite the existence of the Security Council, and in great contrast to the situation of Heinlein's earlier juveniles, these countries possess not mere small conventional forces but their own nuclear weapons as well. After all, the Distant Early Warning radar line, being strung across the Canadian arctic to watch for Soviet bombers even as Heinlein wrote, still is in existence in this book's near-future (223), and it is mentioned in passing that some anti-aircraft missiles - much like the Nikes of the late 1950s - still carry small nuclear warheads (241).

Perhaps even more interesting is the intergalactic "security council" in which the two human protagonists find themselves - and their species - being tried. The spokesman for the million-year-old (227) Three Galaxies, the Moderator of the proceedings, explains, "This is not a court of justice. . . . You would call it a 'Security Council.' Or you might call it a committee of vigilantes. It does not matter what you call it; my sole purpose is to examine your race and see if you threaten our survival. If you do, I will now dispose of you. The only way to avert a grave danger is to remove it while it is small" (232). When the teenaged boy protests against the idea of a government that arbitrarily could judge Earth, the Moderator replies, "Correction. Three Galaxies is not a government; conditions for government cannot obtain in so vast a space, such varied cultures. We have simply formed police districts for mutual protection" (236). The unworkable idealism of Space Cadet may have faded, but the hope for peace and the necessity of transnational cooperation remain.

Indeed, the motives of the Three Galaxies are not at all the selfish, Social Darwinistic ones that so easily could be imagined. While there may be no true unity "in so vast a space, such varied cultures" (236), the motto of the organization is "Three Galaxies, One Law" (205), and their trials proceed by strict and basically equitable rules, judged by a combination of machine and "any dozen dozens" of living creatures (227). All decisions are unanimous, and we are told that no mistake has been made for over a million years (227-28).

This court has the power to rotate an offending planet into another dimension without its sun (222), but such decisions are made for defensive rather than aggressive reasons. One planet is condemned to this destruction because of its expansionism (221), and it is feared that humanity's "savagery, combined with superior intelligence" (235) will become a similar threat once it has attained interstellar travel. Yet the hive mind, supported by species that are "lover[s] of justice" (239) and that "are compassionate, . . . not foolish" (238), decides that humanity is to be put under probation, to be watched and even assisted with "loving forbearance" (239-40). Clearly the so-called vigilantes have gone out of their way to be just while keeping the peace.

Glory Road (1963) provides another example of pragmatic collective security. Although the multi-dimensional "Twenty Universes include many real empires" (211), the overarching "non-system holds together by having no togetherness, no uniformity, never seeking perfection, no utopias - just answers good enough to get by, with lots of looseness and room for many ways and attitudes. . . . Local affairs are local. Infanticide? - they're your babies, your planet. PTAs, movie censorship, disaster relief - the Empire is ponderously unhelpful" (215-16). While the grand ideal of the protection of all intelligent beings by some higher authority as seen in Space Cadet has disappeared, it has been replaced by a broad - some might say cynical - tolerance for almost any kind of self-government. As in Have Space Suit - Will Travel, however, aggression is not permitted: "Thou Shalt Not Blow Up Thy Neighbors' Planet" (214), we are told, is the main type of rule enforced.

Even more pragmatically internationalist than Glory Road is the much earlier Solution Unsatisfactory" (1941), which shows the enforcing of a peace less successful than that of the Twenty Universes. In this story the United States, still basically isolationist in the Second World War, develops a radioactive dust with a half-life short enough that when

spread from the air can be used as an effective weapon of mass destruction without concern for long-term contamination. After helping the British defeat the Nazis, the United States enforces a Pax Americana, requiring a ban on air travel except for those aircraft run by the American military. When the Secretary of Commerce protests that such a measure is "unconstitutional" and "violates civil rights," the director of the weapons project replies in true Heinleinian fashion, "Killing a man violates his civil rights, too" (Expanded 126).

Heinlein does devote discussion to the ethics of the situation, but eventually, as in the real world, pragmatism - yet an enlightened and benevolent pragmatism - prevails. Although the developer of the radioactive dust agrees that "world democracy would be a very fine thing" and says he "would willingly lay down [his] life to accomplish it," he also recognizes that, at least for the present, the world is still too divided by hatred and handicapped by a general lack of education; a destructive cycle of nuclear war would be certain to result (128). The rest of the world is soon disarmed, and after a brief and abortive war begun by the "Eurasian Union," for a short time the world is at peace.

However, the United States itself is a threat to that peace. The story's narrator writes, "I had the usual subconscious conviction that our country would never use power in sheer aggression. Later I thought about the Mexican War and the Spanish-American War and some of the things we did in Central America, and I was not so sure -" (111-12). Considering the date of writing, this is a significant perception. Later the narrator explains, "The hazard was this: Foreign policy is lodged jointly in the hands of the President and the Congress. We were fortunate at the time in having a good President and an adequate Congress, but that was no guarantee for the future. We have had unfit Presidents and power-hungry Congresses - oh, yes! Read the history of the Mexican War" (138-39).

The man who headed the wartime research project, therefore, begins creating "The Commission of World Safety," "a body with the integrity, permanence, and freedom from outside pressure possessed by the Supreme Court of the United States"; it is to be headed by Commissioners whose oath is not to the U.S. Constitution but "to preserve the peace of the world" (140). Screened by psychological testing and interviews, the members of the Commission's "Peace Patrol" are "to be a deliberately expatriated band of Janizaries, with an obligation only to the Commission and to the race, and welded together with a carefully nurtured esprit de corps" (141). Here, it seems, is the kind of peacekeeping organization which later turns up in *Space Cadet*.

However, when the new American president tries to disband the Commission and its Patrol, the showdown forces the Commissioner, the original developer of the dust, to assume world leadership; he becomes "undisputed military dictator of the world" (143-44). Even the narrator admits, "Whether or not any man as universally hated... can perfect the Patrol he envisioned, make it self-perpetuating and trustworthy, I don't know" (144). The end of the story thus significantly lacks the later novel's comforting guarantees of success, but the scenario still might be better than the alternative: the existence of dozens of competing nations being armed with unstoppable weapons of mass destruction.

Perhaps Heinlein's most pragmatic benevolent transnational organization - although one that has not yet taken power - occurs in *Gulf* (1949). Certainly the story contains some very alarming Darwinistic elements: the existence of "New Man, homo novis, who must displace homo sapiens - is displacing him - because he is better able to survive than is homo sap" (44), the New Men's self-assured campaign to quietly execute those who are "clearly morally bankrupt" (49), and the assertion that in another million years "man would be New Man's dog" - or, it is suggested would be better, cat (47). According to one of the New Men's leaders, his own longing for democracy is "like yearning for the Santa Claus you believed in as a child" (48), and "More important is keeping matches away from baby" (50). Despite this very disturbing situation, however, he explains that New Man tries to protect the freedoms of the old: "We can give him personal liberty, we can give him autonomy in most things, we can give him a great measure of personal dignity and we will, because we believe that individual freedom, at all levels, is the direction of evolution, of maximum survival value" (61). This is far from a sentimental celebration of the worth of the average human, but neither is it the genocide to which simple Social Darwinism very well could lead. Even within the grim evolutionary determinism of this story, therefore, the transnational organization of future leaders "selects [its members] for good will and humane intentions as carefully as for ability" (60), and as much as is possible, it tries to protect the freedom and dignity of all. After the protagonists are killed on a mission against those trying to gain control of a nuclear doomsday device that would destroy the entire world, the plaque commemorating the couple's martyrdom reminds us that they "DIED FOR ALL THEIR FELLOW MEN" (67).

In addition to such decently working examples of world government and collective security organizations, Heinlein does give us some occasional negative examples. In *Between Planets* (1951), *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961), and *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* (1966), for example, transnational entities merely support the status quo without any thought to ethics or justice. They illustrate what may happen when such great organizations put mere economic stability ahead of respect for one's citizens or one's neighbors. On those even fewer occasions when Heinlein makes a transnational government responsible for real atrocities, the organizations have begun not with diplomacy but with war, and the source of their flaws are thus even more apparent.

In *Between Planets* an elite organization of scientists must fight "against the historical imperative of the last two centuries, the withering away of individual freedom under larger and even more pervasive organizations" (153). In this future controversial books are banned (10), and citizens are casually spied upon (32). The members of the Interplanetary Bureau of Investigation, "the ubiquitous security police" (20), shadow people on any hint of suspicion, and they routinely use drugs and torture to extract information.

Yet even here Heinlein advocates reforming the world government rather than simply removing it and therefore perhaps letting the territories break up into competing nations. A high-ranking conspirator explains the situation: "Any organization that gets too big and too successful gets to be a nuisance. The Federation got that way - it started out decently enough - and now it has to be trimmed down to size. So that the citizens can enjoy some 'looseness'" (177). As in his other pieces, Heinlein does not deny the need for some minimal form of government but instead wants to circumscribe its power.

In *Stranger in a Strange Land* the Federation of Free Nations (196) uses orbital military stations to ensure world peace

(71), yet rather than working for justice as the Federation of Space Cadet - or even leaving well enough alone as the Twenty Universes of Glory Road this government meddles. According to Heinlein, the all-important rights "embalmed in Amendments I & IX of the United States Constitution" have been "superseded by the Articles of World Confederation"; moreover, a citizen's access to the higher levels of government essentially has disappeared (125).

The main policing arm of the Federation is the Security Service, and just in case we miss the allusion of the initials with which it is almost always mentioned - S.S., like Hitler's infamous Schutzstaffel, or "protective rank" - Heinlein gives one of its officers the Germanic name Heinrich. The crusty Jubal Harshaw then pounds it home:

Jubal conceded that cops qua cops were all right; he had met honest cops...and even a fee-splitting constable did not deserve to be snuffed out. The Coast Guard was an example of what cops ought to be and frequently were.

But to be in the S.S. a man had to have larceny in his heart and sadism in his soul. Gestapo. Storm troopers for whatever politico was in power. Jubal longed for the days when a lawyer could cite the Bill of Rights and not have some over-riding Federation trickery defeat him. (151)(2)

As usual for Heinlein, because the central government possesses more than simple peacekeeping powers, it has become intrusive and stultifying.

In *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*, the eleven billion inhabitants of Earth rely on "the Peace Forces of the Federated Nations" (151) to enforce "an absolute ban against using H-bombs against people" (279). Guided by "the Great Charter" - treason against which is considered treason "against all humanity" (214) - the Federated Nations (EN.) are distantly overseen by a Grand Assembly that includes "All great Peace Force nations, seven veto powers...: N.A. Directorate, Great China, India, Sovunion, Pan-Africa ..., Mittleuropa, Brasilian Union" (259). The nations of Earth are protected by the "F. N. Skytrack" (219) and the "F. N. Peace Navy" (252), yet, as the narrator informs us, they also prudently retain their own defensive forces:

Four great Peace Powers, and some smaller ones, had antimissile defenses; those of North America were supposed to be best. But was subject where even F. N. might not know. All attack weapons were held by Peace Forces but defense weapons were each nation's own pidgin and could be secret. Guesses ranged from India, believed to have no missile interceptors, to North America, believed to be able to do a good job. She had done fairly well in stopping intercontinental H-missiles in Wet Firecracker War past century. (264-65)

So far the political situation seems fairly reminiscent of that of *Have Space Suit - Will Travel*.

However, unlike the Terran peacekeeping entity of the earlier novel - which ends up being necessary to stop an attempted alien invasion of the solar system this organization is interested more in the status quo than in fairness. Though the inhabitants of the lunar colony indeed have adequate political and economic justification for requesting independence, the F.N. will not concede to changing an advantageous one-sided relationship until Luna has demonstrated its capacity to fight. The EN. may not try to overregulate such personal matters as marriage and the like (211), but Heinlein still presents it as something slightly unsavory. He notes, for example, that the former United States has "ceased to mean anything" after being subsumed (202), and one former American assures the narrator, "They're sorry as hell they ever turned things over to the F.N." (281). Not as restrictive as the world government of *Between Planets*, the F.N. of *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* still illustrates the dangers of putting stability ahead of respect for individual rights.

Interestingly enough, when Heinlein moves the faults of world government beyond the "usual" degradation of human rights to the realm of atrocities, it is because the ruling organizations have been shaped by war rather than having evolved through the cooperative political means he obviously prefers. For example, in "Sixth Column" (1941) - later reprinted as *The Day After Tomorrow* (1951) - the PanAsians do not yet control the nations of, say, South America (Day 48), but "they've conquered half a world, hundreds of millions of people" (70); their rule is fiercely racist and commonly repays guerrilla attacks with reprisals against civilians "compounded at unspeakable interest" (25). Despite the apparent genuine goodwill of its complacent leaders, the society of Farnham's Freehold (1964) is even more inhumane. Over two millennia after twentieth-century Americans, Europeans, Russians, and Chinese are annihilated in a nuclear and biological holocaust, the ruling descendants of African survivors keep white slaves and practice a rather unlikely cannibalism. Whereas in *Between Planets*, *Stranger in a Strange Land*, and *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*, power corrupts once-sound ideals and diplomacy, the pressures of war have shaped these two aberrant worlds from the outset, producing governments that are far more sinister and hence far less usual to Heinlein's writing.

Finally, every now and then Heinlein posits some form of either world government or world confederation as a given pan of the setting without necessarily suggesting much about how it should or should not be constituted. In fairly early stories such as the Future History pieces "Misfit" (1939), "If This Goes On -" (1940), "'- We Also Walk Dogs'" (1941), "The Green Hills of Earth" (1947), "Space Jockey" (1947), "The Man Who Sold the Moon" (1950), and "Requiem" (1950), Heinlein purposefully mentions a United Nations or Federation in the political background(3); in "Jerry Was a Man" (1947) and "Ordeal in Space" (1948) no transnational federation is named directly, but the mention of interplanetary treaties (Assignment 191, Past 352) suggests its existence.(4) Under the auspices of the "rainbow banner" of Terran unity - or at least of equitable peace - Noisy Rhysling's "Green Hills of Earth" may be sung (Past 363), D. D. Harriman's legal maneuverings may be legitimated, (200-201), "A-bomb rocket[s] circling the globe like... policem[e]n" may continue "guarding the peace of the planet" (230), and the young volunteers of the Cosmic Construction Corps may "fix up the solar system so that human beings can make better use of it" (635).

Heinlein also extends such very lightly drawn governments to "Waldo" (1942), *Beyond This Horizon* (1948), *Farmer in the Sky* (1950), *Starman Jones* (1953), *Tunnel in the Sky* (1955), *Time for the Stars* (1956), and *Podkayne of Mars* (1963). The transnational political organization of each of these works is taken for granted, neither especially held up as a manifestation of desirable political conduct nor condemned as stifling to individual freedom. The government of *Beyond This Horizon*, for example, may allow its basically contented populace individual freedom and material wealth, but it is set so far in the future as to be more a literary experiment - a mere setting - than a practical goal. In *Tunnel in*

the Sky the "Terran Corporation" maintains the world's transdimensional gates and conducts diplomacy for Earth, but when the stereotypical "brawny Mongol policemen" of the apparently Communist "Australasian Republic" chivvy their emigrants through the extraterritorial zone of "Emigrants' Gap" with rough "shoving and shouting and prodding," the local North American police are powerless (9-13); Heinlein may disapprove, and one cop may shout a protest, but the protagonist seems to think nothing amiss. Even the system of Starman Jones, whose restrictive hereditary guilds are blithely supported by the Imperial government, receives what for Heinlein is a ridiculously few token lines of protest (54, 85, 251); it is a simple backdrop to the action, its injustices uncharacteristically skirted.

After the 1960s Heinlein's works deal rather little with transnationalism. *I Will Fear No Evil* (1970), for example, features a United States that has degenerated into "a de facto anarchy under an elected dictator even though we still have laws and legislatures and Congress" (39). In *Friday* (1982) the United States has been Balkanized, and the entire world is racked by revolutions and corporate warfare. The optimism of his earlier work, which ranges from wild to guarded, has faded.

Yet Heinlein's long dalliance with transnational organization is interesting and not at all what one might expect after reading criticism emphasizing his militarism and Social Darwinism. Between the 1940s and the 1960s Heinlein uses world government as a mere science fictional cliché on numerous occasions, and, rather tellingly, he portrays it far fewer times as something to be avoided. Even more significantly, in many works he discusses world government or world confederation with deliberation, exploring not only the limitations of transnationalism but also the great potentials. His is a significant, often hopeful experimentation, and from more than thirty years of flirting with the topic comes an important affirmation of the necessity of collective security.

Throughout his career Heinlein simply cannot resist returning again and again to the concept of transnational organization. Early ideas of brotherly cooperation and proactive altruism may be abandoned as overly optimistic, but the notion of collective security at least cannot. It is easy enough to sneer loftily at "the phallogocentric weapon culture," as Donna Glee Williams does (165), yet reaching for such a trendy term seems to me every bit as knee-jerk as reaching for a gun. It is better to understand the situation in terms of its context the variables of human behavior which daily remind us - in the Persian Gulf, in Bosnia, in the inner city - of the propensity of the unscrupulous to prey upon the weak. Those who "forget this basic truth," we are told in *Starship Troopers*, "have always paid for it with their lives and freedom" (24).

Heinlein rarely says that might makes right;(5) he is correct, however, in reminding us that might may be necessary to preserve right. For Robert A. Heinlein, apparently, there can be no more Munichs - and rightly so; his works rarely suggest the complete subsumation of nations into a bland, and perhaps unrealizable, world state, but they cling doggedly to the idea of diplomacy and multilateral agreements designed to keep an equitable peace within the community of nations. If we forget this lesson and withdraw from the world, whether in sordid complacency or in noble pacifism, we eventually may find ourselves at the mercy of the real Social Darwinists.

## Notes

An early draft of this paper was presented on May 16, 1997 at the Twenty-seventh Annual Convention of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature, in East Lansing, Michigan.

1. Certainly there are contradictions and dilemmas in Heinlein criticism as well. To state, as Tucker does, that the corporal punishment used in *Starship Troopers* against, among others, drunk drivers, is "not reserved for rare and horrible crimes" (187) is grimly ironic: Tucker is correct to imply that drunk driving is not rare, but I cannot help wondering whether a crime responsible for tens of thousands of American traffic fatalities yearly indeed might not be considered horrible.

2. Harshaw would be satisfied with the system of "Sky Lift" (1953), wherein "the military always [gets] stuck with these succor-&-rescue jobs" like hauling desperately needed blood out to Pluto aboard a "torch ship" at punishingly high acceleration (120); although in this tightly focused story Heinlein does not call the government by name - a bit uncharacteristically - it seems a transnational one like that of the idealistic works such as *Space Cadet* and *Citizen of the Galaxy*.

3. The United Nations also exists in such contemporary stories as "The Year of the Jackpot" (1952) and "Project Nightmare" (1953), but it is mentioned only in passing and seems as relatively powerless as its real-world equivalent. In *The Puppet Masters* (1951) the UN may control the space stations (81), but in fighting the parasitic slugs from Titan it is "no help": "they hemmed and hawed and sent the matter back to committee for investigation" (107-8).

4. According to Heinlein's chart of the so-called Future History, of course, "Jerry Was a Man" does not belong to the series, but the story is perhaps no more foreign it than "'- We Also Walk Dogs,'" which supposedly does belong (Past 360-61); certainly each story posits technologies that are present in no other Future History works.

5. For some unfortunate examples of might apparently making right, see the legality of dueling in *Beyond This Horizon* (1948); the refusal of a revolutionary in *Red Planet* "to interfere in a private quarrel" (155) that is, provide common police protection to an officious schoolmaster from a man who has "promised him a honey of a beating if he'll only come out and stand up ... like a man" (152); the propensity of the soldiers of *Starship Troopers* to give offending fellows their "lumps" and the novel's underlying premise that even civilized societies must expand rather than merely remaining strong (147); and the deportation of criminals in *Time Enough for Love* (1973) to a planet already inhabited by "quite fierce savages" "neither intelligent enough to be civilized nor tractable enough to be enslaved" (8-9).

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